
A. T. Ariyaratne

COLLECTED WORKS

VOLUME IX



Forward by Prof. Laurence R. Simon
Editing & Introduction by Emily C. Barry

COLLECTED WORKS
VOLUME IX

A. T. Ariyaratne
COLLECTED WORKS
VOLUME IX

COLLECTED WORKS Vol. IX

A.T. Ariyaratne

© Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement

ISBN 978-955-599-513-9

First Edition

2012 August

Cover Page & Page setting by

P. D. M. Madushan

Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha (pvt) Ltd

Printed by

Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha (pvt) Ltd

NO: 77, De Soysa Road,

Rawatawatta, Moratuwa,

Sri Lanka.

Table of contents

1.	Forward	vii
2.	Introduction	xi
3.	Strengths and Barriers for Effective Technology Development and Transfer: Experience from Sri Lanka and a Way Forward - <i>August 22nd, 2008</i>	1
4.	Education for Peace and a Sustainable Future - <i>September 5th, 2008</i>	11
5.	From Inner Peace to Outer Peace - <i>November 17th, 2008</i>	23
6.	Spiritual Development and Good Governance - <i>April 4th, 2009</i>	37
7.	A New Lifestyle for a New Era - <i>May 19th, 2009</i>	53
8.	Mother Theresa: Angel of Mercy - <i>September 5th, 2009</i>	65
9.	Future is in the Village - <i>November 23rd, 2009</i>	73
10.	Towards a Nonviolent Political Economy From the Village Level Up - <i>February 3rd, 2010</i>	79
11.	Global Recovery: A Buddhist Perspective - <i>May 26th, 2010</i>	89
12.	A Buddhist Perspective on Religious Co - existence in a Multi-cultural Society - <i>August 1st, 2010</i>	99
13.	Education for Sustainable Development - <i>September 11th, 2010</i>	107
14.	Higher Education and Sustainable Development - <i>September 11th, 2010</i>	119

15.	The Leadership Figure that Future Asian Society Needs - <i>October 9th, 2010</i>	125
16.	Panel Discussion on Qualities of Leaders - <i>October 9th, 2010</i>	139
17.	Sarvodaya Submission to the Presidential Commission on Lessons Learned and Reconciliation - <i>November 9th, 2010</i>	145
18.	Reconciliation Through the Teachings of The Buddha - <i>November 16th, 2010</i>	175
19.	Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba's 85th Year of Advent: A Humble Tribute - <i>November 23rd, 2010</i>	183
20.	Buddhism and Peacemaking - <i>April 28th, 2011</i>	191
21.	Acceptance Speech on the Conferring of the Basava Sree Award - <i>August 15th, 2011</i>	219
22.	Natural Disasters and Religion- In Search of an Alternate Way of Life - <i>October 10th, 2011</i>	229
23.	Working for Peaceful Co-existence and a Just World - <i>December 27th, 2011</i>	241
24.	Inaugural Address at the 44th All India Sarvodaya Samaj Sammelan - <i>December 29th, 2011</i>	253
25.	Address at Shanthi Ashram - <i>January 30th, 2012</i>	269
26.	Gandian Inspiration Nourishes A Development Movement Based on the Buddhist Philosophy - <i>March 25th, 2012</i>	277

FORWORD

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne celebrated his 80th birthday in November 2011 surrounded by friends and admirers from around the world. This edition of his collected works is published to commemorate that milestone.

Dr. Ariyaratne has been the towering figure in Sri Lankan development and peace since the founding of Sarvodaya Shramadana in 1958. His philosophy that development should be rooted in the ancient values of one's culture was of considerable influence not only in Sri Lanka but throughout Asia and beyond. He was among the first to critique a kind of modernization that like a bulldozer would push aside everything in the path economic growth. For Dr. Ariyaratne, modernization meant raising standards of living without sacrificing the non-material richness of his society or human and societal relations that should not be compromised by the quest for material wealth.

Sarvodaya's legendary work was mobilizing the resources inherent in every poor community to solve their own problems. The first steps were often primary education and village health care, repair of ancient irrigation tanks and roads. "We build the road and the road builds us" moved people from the passivity of waiting for government to helping each other's communities through a gift of labor. As a science teacher, Dr. Ariyaratne was not averse to modern innovation. He was among the first in the world to try controlling the spread of malaria through environmental means or to test experimental grain storage technologies in the village setting.

Sarvodaya's success was an important part of Sri Lanka's stunning improvement in lowering infant and child mortality and achieving near universal literacy. Even during the pre-1997 years of economic stagnation, Sarvodaya's work laid the foundation for a new kind of society where all might benefit from an expanding economy without extremes of wealth and poverty. Government development policies began to emulate Sarvodaya in the 1980s and 90s, and Dr. Ariyaratne would have

been feted as a national hero but for the dynastic ambitions of heads of state who saw him as a potential rival. His popularity was greater than any government official. I recall even in the late 1970s and 80s riding into villages watching the people receive him the way they would a respected spiritual leader. Even a former Sri Lankan Ambassador to the United States, himself a renowned Buddhist scholar, told me when Ariyaratne and I visited his official residence in Washington that "Ariyaratne is our Gandhi."

And like Gandhi, Ariyaratne has had his share of adversity, even assassination efforts. His steadfast resistance to government policies that perpetuated the 28 year war with the Tamil Tigers was cause for repression of Sarvodaya during the presidency of Ranasinghe Premadasa (1989 until his own assassination in 1993). Ariyaratne lamented the loss of life and crimes committed by both sides. He lamented the stunning waste of resources that were needed for development and the decline in the wellbeing of the country.

I worked on a UN technical assistance team in Sri Lanka during the worst of those times and witnessed first-hand the attempts to intimidate and silence him, to stop the massive peace meditations, to confiscate the movement's offices and farm, to close down Sarvodaya's printing presses, and to unleash thugs to threaten his life. He would come to my rooms in the middle of the night to whisper the latest threats and his determination to persevere. When Premadasa (himself a figure of tragic contradictions – at once committed to uplifting the poor but thinking himself the reincarnation of ancient kings) launched a Presidential Commission of Inquiry in to the Conduct of NGOs, everyone knew that it was really an elaborate mechanism to find a pretext to prosecute Ariyaratne. The hearings dragged on but could find no irregularities and in the end petered out. Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan Supreme Court ruled in Sarvodaya's favor on a fundamental rights lawsuit brought to force the government to return Sarvodaya's property.

Ariyaratne's influence internationally is reflected in the many awards he has received. These include the Ramon Magsaysay

Award for Community Leadership in 1969, the Gandhi Peace Prize from the government of India in 1996, the Niwano Peace Prize from Japan in 1992, and the King Beaudoin Award from Belgium. The University of Minnesota awarded him the Hubert H. Humphrey International Humanitarian Award in 1994. In 2006, he received the Acharya Sushil Kumar International Peace Prize in Canada. In 2007 Ariyaratne received his country's highest honour, the Sri Lankabhimanya.

These and other awards testify to the enduring and profound work of Dr. Ariyarante and his life's partner Neetha. Embracing modernity and conserving tradition, his life and career speak volumes about the choices that we all still confront. In these Collected Works are clues to another way of life – one that eschews greed and blind accumulation and that returns us toward the path of right livelihood and the wellbeing of all.

Prof. Laurence R. Simon

Sustainable International Development Graduate Programs
The Heller School for Social Policy and Management
Brandeis University
USA

INTRODUCTION

The first eight volumes of Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne's collected works cover the development of the philosophy and the praxis of this grand movement for its first forty-seven years up to year 2007. This ninth volume of collected works extends Sarvodaya's action and philosophy through five more years that have been of great magnitude for Sri Lanka and for Sarvodaya. Vital events that occurred in this five-year period include the end of Sarvodaya's short-term 2005 tsunami recovery programming, the end of Sri Lanka's thirty-year civil conflict and the start of Sarvodaya's civil conflict recovery programming, the global recession, several further natural disasters, Sarvodaya's fiftieth birthday also Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne's own eightieth birthday. Dr. A. T. Ariyarante discusses Sarvodaya's thought and action taken during these times.

It seems essential to give a quick overview of the Sarvodaya Movement for readers who are not extremely familiar with Dr. Ari's creation. Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne founded the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement fifty-three years ago during his time as a high school science teacher. He brought a group of teachers and students to work with one low-caste Sri Lankan village on a sharing-of-labor project that resulted in material improvements to the village and awakening for all people involved. The one-time project developed into a movement of hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans who now work holistically under the Sarvodaya Shramadana umbrella to improve quality of life in Sri Lanka.

This Movement is truly unique in the way it works toward a comprehensive development plan through programmatic efforts in governance, economics and spirituality. This development plan is grounded in democratic participation at the village level, the cardinal principle of nonviolence, and the understanding that diverse ethnic and religious groups can work and build consciousness to improve quality of life together. The Sarvodaya people believe in an alternative path for development and the Movement's development efforts operate through several thousand self-governing Sarvodaya

village societies. These village societies work themselves to awaken individual personalities and put individuals in the driver seat of their own development, and in turn are supported by district-level, regional-level and national-level Sarvodaya staff.

This Movement is grounded in the Buddhist focus of 'awakening', or getting all people to re-conceptualize what is important in life and rise above consumerism, individualism and commercialism. Sarvodaya's concept of 'awakening' starts with the building of moral, cultural, spiritual, social, economic and political infrastructure through various Sarvodaya development programs (from programming in social service, education, technology, microfinance, etc.). This infrastructure leads way to personality awakening, which leads to family awakening, then village awakening, then national awakening, and finally global awakening. This focus on personality awakening leading to global awakening is a bottom-up approach to help people take control of their lives, rise above desire and suffering, and follow the middle path towards a healthy, no-poverty, no-affluence society.

Over the past fifty-four years, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne has led the Movement in carrying out peace marches and meditations, building preschools, operating refugee camps, petitioning the government, organizing village leaders, empowering poor villagers to make their own non-partisan political decisions, making microcredit loans, representing grassroots development organizations at world famous conferences, carrying out women's empowerment programs, facilitating educational exchanges between youth of different ethnic backgrounds, running nutrition centers, staffing orphanages, and offering legal aid. These are only a few examples of Sarvodaya activities that have taken place in about 15,000 villages throughout the country. The previous eight volumes of collected works include speeches and writings that reflect these many Sarvodaya efforts of the development of the Sarvodaya Movement. These collected works help practitioners and scholars alike understand the Sarvodaya philosophy and praxis.

The previous eight volumes of Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne's collected

works show us how Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne built an organization that not only works for economic, political and spiritual change in Sri Lanka, but also acts as a catalyst for broader change in the entire world. The previous editor of Dr. Ari's collected works, late Dr. Nandasena Ratnapala, understood the forward and outward progression in the philosophy and praxis of the Sarvodaya Movement throughout its first forty-seven years. He has passed on, but his editing style and his forwards show a man who had a deep understanding of, knowledge of and respect for Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne and the work of the Sarvodaya Movement.

Like Dr. Nandasena Ratnapala, I too have a deep respect for Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya Movement. However, I am very unlike Nandasena Ratnapala in the fact that I am a young student, a female, a westerner and of Catholic background. I was hesitant when Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne first invited me to edit and write the introduction for this ninth volume of collected works. However, I now realize that in asking me to edit and write the introduction for this great piece of work, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne is showing how the principles of his teachings can be applicable and relevant to people from many different walks of life. But even more importantly, he is symbolically putting his faith in the face of future change; he is putting his faith in the young generations, in diversity, in modernity, and in humanity as a whole. This very faith is reflected in the change-catalyzing writings and speeches that I have brought together and reproduced for his ninth volume of collected works.

One of these speeches is a speech given in Tokyo in November 2008 titled From Inner Peace to Outer Peace. In this speech Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne says, "...the principal goal of our organization when we started the movement at that time was to broaden the educational experience of our children in the classroom and extend education past textbooks and examinations to the living community, the broader world environment, and life experiences." At the start of his work, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne aimed to give his students a broader understanding of life and how to live life in a right way. Still today through his 9th volume of collected works, Dr. Ari is putting faith in you, in me and in humanity by teaching us how to understand and live life in a

broader and more holistic way.

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne's speeches and writings in this 9th volume bring his work with students in 1953 full-circle. Even in his 80th year of living, he teaches people how to critically and comprehensively deconstruct certain perceptions and understandings of concepts like 'wellbeing', 'peace' and 'progress'. Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne teaches us, his students, how to re-conceptualize important issues and take action in complex areas of our lives, whether they be economic, social, spiritual, or other. He teaches us how we can re-think and understand anew the complexities and paradoxes of how reality is framed to us by those who hold power, whether these be international bodies, western governments, the corporate world, the Sri Lankan government, those in the wealthy ruling class, our religious leaders, etc. Most importantly, he teaches and shows us how to enact positive change in education systems, the application of technology, post-conflict reconciliation in Sri Lanka, governance systems, development strategies, environmental sustainability programs, leadership approaches, peacemaking strategies, among many more areas.

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne's thought and praxis in this 9th volume of collected works is a gift to current and future students. Whether we are old, young, Sri Lankan, non-Sri Lankan, Buddhist or from another of the world's religions, we can glean great insight from these speeches and writings about how we can better apply Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne and Sarvodaya principles in their truest sense to enact positive change for the benefit of all.

Emily C. Barry

PhD Student

Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University

USA

**Strengths and Barriers for Effective Technology
Development and Transfer:
Experience from Sri Lanka and a Way Forward**

Presentation made to the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka International Conference on 'South-South Cooperation for Technology Transfer and the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Colombo, Sri Lanka

August 18th-22nd, 2008

I would like to thank the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka for inviting me to this international conference. I would also like to join with other Sri Lankan participants to welcome our international guests. These guests have come to our country to share their experiences and thoughts with us.

It is with great hesitation that I speak at intellectual gatherings of this nature to scholars and experts from various sectors. I am neither an academic nor an expert in any field. Instead, I started a voluntary movement with my fellow teachers and students when I was a simple schoolmaster. I started a voluntary movement to help our village communities awaken to their full potential and attain a better quality of life.

To this day, I continue to be a student and a community educator in the rural areas of this country. This year is the fiftieth anniversary of this endeavor I created, popularly known as the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka.

In the few minutes allotted to me today, I will briefly relate to you my thinking on the subject of technology transfer. Whenever I am asked to speak on a topic, I use one common measure or standard to discuss the topic. This measure is the positive or negative impact that a particular intervention has on the people, especially the most poor and powerless people.

The poor and the powerless are marginalized and are slowly disappearing from mainstream society. Instead, the rich is the powerful minority that is increasingly dominating over the lives, livelihood, land, assets and traditional value systems of the poor. Introduction of new technologies should not in any way aggravate the already existing disadvantageous situation of these exploited people. After decades of working with the poor, I see this tendency ever increasing at a faster rate. Governments allocate large sums of money to bring new technologies to people, but this money ends up in the pockets of racketeers who win the confidence of corrupt politicians. This money also buys over technocrats and bureaucrats who claim that they are doing 'good' for our people, particularly the poor people. The end result is an enrichment of political masters and

rich individuals. Technology transfer should not result in such counterproductive consequences.

Most genuine and uncorrupt scholars and government administrators are aware of the numerous but appropriate technologies that the Sarvodaya Movement has been promoting in this country. The Sarvodaya Movement has been promoting these so-called 'second rate' technologies even long before the government thought about the relevance of this type of technology. In spite of this fact, at numerous occasions and meetings like this one today, I have been ridiculed and I have been accused of being a crazy person who is trying to turn the clock back.

I had the unique experience of meeting Dr. E. F. Schumacher at his home in England in the early seventies. He casually gave me a manuscript to read the night I met him. I stayed up almost the whole night absorbed in his writings published in 1973 under the title, *Small is Beautiful*. From that experience onwards, the concept of technology as relevant to the people in economically exploited countries began to germinate and nurture in my mind. The chapter on Buddhist economics was particularly relevant and still is even today after 35 years of publication. Dr. Schumacher says on page 42 and I quote,

"While the materialist is mainly interested in goods, the Buddhist is mainly interested in liberation. But Buddhism is 'The Middle Way' and therefore in no way antagonistic to physical well-being. It is not wealth that stands in the way of liberation but attachment to wealth; not the enjoyment of pleasurable things but the craving for them. The keynote of Buddhist economics, therefore, is simplicity and non-violence. From an economist's point of view, the marvel of the Buddhist way of life is the utter rationality of its pattern – amazingly small means leading to extraordinary satisfactory results."

Similarly, the Sarvodaya development model emphasis is not on the creation of an affluent society. The emphasis of our model is on the creation of a no-poverty society where satisfaction of basic needs and secondary needs of all is given priority (as

opposed to the self-indulgence of a few affluent people). The Sarvodaya model is now promoted in over 15,000 villages in Sri Lanka.

Sarvodaya aims to create three categories of revolutionary change in the Sarvodaya communities in which it works. The first category is changing the thinking of people so that they can come to accept that development is primarily development of people and the awakening of personalities. This category is about changing the thinking of people so that people can experience balanced growth with respect to many dimensions of development. These many dimensions of development include spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political dimensions. The second category is organizing children, mothers, farmers, elders and others to build structures under their control that can help satisfy basic and secondary needs. The third category of change is with respect to the technology people use. Sarvodaya communities are encouraged to profit from technological advances that are appropriately adapted, modified and developed for use at the community level.

Thus, it is not our objective to create a consumerist market economy. Nor are we keen to introduce every new technological device from the market into the lives of Sarvodaya community members. It is common knowledge how markets work to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. We don't believe that modernity is related to time, nor do we believe that modernity is equivalent to using every new technological device. Instead, we believe that modernity is more akin to the utility value, affordability and sustainability of a particular technological innovation at a particular time to a particular community.

We have to be self-reliant as far as our food, energy, water and such other basic needs are concerned. We should not allow ourselves to be governed by the price fluctuations that are occurring in society today. There is a need for innovation in appropriate technologies and techniques that are used in correct economic management and good governance. The technologies that Sarvodaya introduces to our rural communities are an extension and improvement of the technologies that

are already in use in the village; we never replace whatever is appropriate and functional prior to our arrival in a village.

Sarvodaya tried and succeeded in the implementation of many new technologies. These include the use of ecological farming, the use of organic agriculture, the use of effective micro-organisms (EM) instead of chemicals to the construction of community gravity water systems, the use of silos for the prevention and storage of rice paddy and other grains, the construction of wind mills for generating electricity, the construction of earthen stoves, the use of solar power, the promotion of hydropower for rural electricity supply, the construction of fuel-saving earthen stoves, the creation of microcredit programs to promote small and medium size enterprises and many more projects and programs. Additionally, we always had long-term sustainability in mind. I remember a time in the seventies when, at my invitation, Dr. Schumacher visited some of these Sarvodaya projects and gave us valuable suggestions about the promotion of intermediate technology. I organized a few public lectures and helped him spread the word among interested development practitioners.

Unfortunately, the transfer of unsustainable technology has taken root in most of our 'global south' countries. These countries should be called 'poor countries' or the 'poor and powerless sectors of all communities and countries'. We should not be fooled by the concepts of 'north', 'south', 'south-south cooperation', 'developing countries', 'non-aligned nations', 'the global village', etc., that are thrust on us. These are convenient expressions coined knowingly or unknowingly by those with vested interests to keep the status quo of the privileged classes. The real division is not based on geographical boundaries. The real division is based who exploits whom economically, socially and politically.

After fifty years of hard work, we in Sarvodaya have come to believe that village or community self-governance is the objective we should pursue because this is the only path to freedom for disadvantaged people all over the world. I personally believe that the promotion of most modern

information technology among rural communities combined with the community traditional value systems built around the concept of well-being for all together can usher in a new era of liberation for the poor and the powerless. This can become a national horizontal network that can progressively extend vertically to the decision-making establishments. We in Sarvodaya call this national awakening or deshodaya.

Technology is only a means to achieve a well thought out, intended end. Technology is not an end in itself. Similarly, small, medium and large-scale enterprises need to be mindful of this fact. Unfortunately, investors do not have our national objectives in mind; their goal is the production of technology for sale and maximum profit. Instead, Sarvodaya thinks of maximum happiness for all. What use is the transfer of technology if it just results in the acquisition of enormous wealth and power for a few and utter misery for most?

To get the real benefits of advances in science and technology, we have to have a correct notion of the principles and ways in which new technologies can be introduced to the masses of people, especially those people who are marginalized, exploited, dependent, indebted, poor and powerless. Technology transfer per se is not going to improve the situation of these people. Technology transfer can only improve the situation of these people if it is an integral part of a total holistic approach to improving society. For example, technology transfer can help create a society where the well-being of all (sarvodaya) is ensured. This may be a society where non-violence is the hallmark of all human relationships and a society where participation of all members of the community with regard to the human needs satisfaction as well as human rights preservation is guaranteed. This may be a society where a high priority is given to preservation of the environment and a society where the non-renewable resources are conserved. This may be a society where technology is not introduced if it pollutes and destroys the life-support systems such as air, water and soil, and a society where essential basic needs are satisfied, such as water, food, clothing, housing, health care, energy needs, total education, and spiritual, moral and cultural needs.

On the guise of transfer of technology, we should not encourage our people to go into debt, particularly into debt with financial institutions. We should never allow people to mortgage their properties to acquire new technology. Microfinance institutions should be established and the village folk should be trained to run their enterprises efficiently. Self-governance methods and techniques should be developed and mastered. Minimal legal frameworks that are enhanced by strong traditional constructive value systems should be introduced in order for the community to be aware of its legal rights and responsibilities. The community objective of economic justice for all through cooperative enterprises should also be encouraged.

Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services, Sarvodaya Rural Technical Services, Sarvodaya Women's Movement, Sarvodaya IT Network (FUSION), Sarvodaya Shanti Sena (the peace brigade), and Sarvodaya Disaster Relief Services, Sarvodaya Community Health Services (SECDP) are just some of the instruments we have developed for technology transfer in our communities. Sarvodaya plays a part in 15,000 communities and of these, around 3,000 villages are self-governing units.

I think important gatherings of this nature should not ignore the immense damage that massive technology transfer cause. Technology transfer can cripple countries that cannot pay for the technology. It can also cripple countries that do not have the knowhow to reproduce such technology because this makes the technology unsustainable and encourages dependency.

Everything I have said so far is based on fifty years of village development experience. The relevant technologies I have referred to were all very successful attempts. We have continued to practice some of them in our village self-development activities and village self-governance programs. Others have been taken over by governmental institutions, banks, rich NGOs, multinational corporations or other bodies with vested interests.

Selfishness and greed are bad qualities. But, when selfishness and greed are systematically organized and technologically

empowered and patronized by corrupt politicians, the result is social crimes. While the technologies we introduce liberate people from their economic bondage, those with motives of selfishness and greed only perpetrate this bondage.

I would like to make a humble appeal to the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka (NSF) and the National Science and Technology Commission (NASTEC). Voluntary organizations like Sarvodaya cannot afford to do research at the magnitude it should be done in this country. There are several research and development organizations in India, like the Centre for Science for Villages in Wardha, Maharashtra, that look into issues of appropriate technology transfer. We need such research centers here in Sri Lanka to teach us how to better transfer technology to villages. Similarly, we need universities that conduct technology courses to encourage their students to work with community-based organizations. We need these universities to also encourage their faculty to start a process of communicating and developing relevant technologies alongside village people.

More than two-thirds of the world's poor live in Asia. Nearly half of these people live in southern Asia. We in Asia have achieved a lot with regard to breakthroughs in food production, but there are still so many people faced with hunger. Our economists and leaders are talking about 'growth'. They are devastating our rich natural resources, forests, sanctuaries, etc., for the sake of this 'growth'. Why don't they adapt a sustainable approach to development? Why do most Asian people live on an average daily income of U.S. \$2 per day in spite of rapid economic growth in this region? In spite of being one of the most ancient civilizations in the world, why do we have so many social conflicts? I believe that as scientists and technologists you will pay attention to these questions in your deliberations.

I shall conclude my intervention once again quoting from the epilogue of *Small is Beautiful*.

In the excitement over the unfolding of his scientific and technical powers, modern man has built a

system of production that ravishes nature and a type of society that mutilates man. If there were more and more wealth, everything else, it is thought, would fall into place. Money is considered to be all-powerful; if it could not actually buy nonmaterial values, such as justice, harmony, beauty or even health, it could circumvent the need for them or compensate for their loss. The development of production and the acquisition of wealth have thus become the highest goals of the modern world in relation to which all other goals, no matter how much lip-service may still be paid to them, have come to take second place. The highest goals require no justification; all secondary goals have to finally justify themselves in terms of the service their attainment renders to the attainment of the highest.

Thank you very much for your patience.

Reference:

Schumacher, E. F. (1973). *Small is beautiful: Economics as if people mattered*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Education for Peace and a Sustainable Future

*Sub-Regional Consultation Meeting on Development of
Education for International Understanding Policy in South Asia
Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International
Understanding*

Colombo, Sri Lanka
September 5th, 2008

I extend my appreciation and thanks to Director Kang Dai-Geun of the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding for inviting me for this guest lecture on the topic of education for peace and sustainability. As a long-standing friend, I ventured to accept his kind invitation in spite of my lack of familiarity with modern trends in education.

When I glance through daily papers, particularly weekend newspapers, I am very intrigued to find large numbers of pages, sometimes long supplements, devoted to all kinds of education. A closer look reveals that all of them are paid advertisements offering students a variety of degrees from numerous universities in the world, of course, for a price affordable only to an affluent few. As an old-time schoolmaster and a community educator, I am truly confused as to what has become of free education in this country.

A roof cannot float in the air without supporting pillars, walls and foundations. When I look around, I see a lack of support in place in the form of a parallel international school system. Nurseries, playgroups, preschools, primary schools, secondary schools, technical schools and so on are in place under the label of international schools. These are instituted, not only in affluent urban areas, but also in economically backward areas as well. The ludicrous situation is that in our so-called democratic socialist republic, there are two parallel kinds of educational systems, one that operates under the National Education Acts passed by Parliament, and the other that operates under the generally accepted globalization norms and under commercial laws of a laissez faire system. The former caters to all including the rich if they so desire, but the latter system caters only to the rich class of people who can afford to pay.

This is the real situation prevailing in Sri Lanka. There is one educational system for the ordinary masses and the other system for the rich. This necessarily nurtures a class system where the rich and the powerful send their children to international schools with better buildings, facilities, teachers and social recognition. Certainly the quality of education in these schools can be much superior to that of government schools with ill-

equipped, under-staffed and lesser-paid teachers. The danger is that most of those individuals who are rich and powerful have acquired their wealth and status through wrong means.

Those who earn their living by right means generally cannot afford to send their children to international schools. They have to be content with state-owned and managed schools, whatever their defects. Otherwise, they have to join that category of generally corrupt new rich. I don't mean that quality education in government schools is all bad or all good in international schools. In both systems, one can find good as well as bad schools as well as good or bad facilities. Within the state system there also are discrepancies. Out-of-school tuition classes have become a profitable industry for some teachers due to insufficient inputs within the classroom. The Ministry of Education, according to some press reports, is said to be a very corrupt and badly managed body that cannot keep teachers content, fill up vacancies for school principals and teachers, find schools for kindergarten children, provide science labs to all secondary schools and manage public examinations. It is a shame that the Supreme Court has to intervene to order the Ministry to better run their internal affairs.

The evolution of a parallel education system, which caters mostly to the people with ill-gotten wealth, has brought about several national disasters. The first is further degeneration of the indigenous free national educational system. The second is the new educational system that provides an opportunity for people who earn money by corrupt and unethical means to clean up their earnings. It is common knowledge that money laundering occurs in other sectors, but it is tragic that education is becoming another means for this money laundering. The far-reaching, harmful social and economic consequences of this chain of unethical activities cannot be predicted easily.

If we imagine for a moment disparities between those students who go through the national free education system and those who pass out from the fully western, commercialized education system, it is frightening to think of the confrontation these individuals may have in the near future. They will have different

mental and psychological make-ups, life styles, languages they speak, social conduct, visions of a new society or a new world, and different values and belief systems. There will be so many discrepancies that these young people will not know how to reconcile with the broader society. Seeds of conflict and non-sustainability are sown in this dichotomous educational system.

Some educators and psychologists who study very inhuman kinds of ragging in Sri Lankan Universities say that the children who come from rural homes behave much worse than those who come from urban sectors. This may be the first opportunity the rural children have to show their antipathy for the urban rich. This kind of subconsciously driven behavioral trend may be manifested in ways that are much worse when those who pass out of international schools system can access much better job opportunities than those who pass through the free education system.

For me, it is incomprehensible how those who have invested in education as a largely a profit-making enterprise conceive of education. What is education? What are the goals and objectives of education? To what extent is there a justification for investing in what may be called the most critical social activity to bring about human unity, happiness and enlightenment if the end result is inequity, discrimination and social tension? How different is this approach to the promotion of education from the past where rich people and philanthropists both local and foreign invested much wealth and lifetimes of service to improve the educational level of the common people in this country?

I have highest admiration to those heads and teachers of most international schools who in their own way contribute to excellence in education in their particular sector. I am only questioning the social policy of this system and the disparity that is being created and widened between the haves and have-nots. At a national level, a reconciliation of these disparities should be attempted without delay.

For peace and sustainability, then, where is the hope? There

is no doubt that we as a species are heading towards a certain catastrophe in our human society and that we are dragging along with us other species that exist on this planet. We are not sure whether we will have sufficient food to feed the world population. Even if there is enough food, there won't be a just and fair economic system to allow the food to reach hungry stomachs. Like education and health, the production and distribution of food also has become a moneymaking enterprise. Agriculture is no longer aimed at feeding the people. There is enough fuel to sustain all for a few more decades until we find alternative energy sources. There again, the international global market system stands in our way and has created the present energy crisis. Immensely rich individuals and their multinational corporations have grabbed almost all of the life support systems on this planet when these systems are the very systems needed by humanity for survival.

In other words, this is not a problem confronting education alone. It is not a matter pertaining to peace and sustainability, but it is a matter as serious as the very survival of life on this planet.

This is why I said that we have to revert back to our first principles, humane principles, and make a global effort to revive and give meaning to education as relevant to modern challenges we face. These challenges include respecting and protecting all life on earth, conserving and protecting life support systems, promoting the survival of environment and eco-systems, reversing the global climate change, healing the psychological wounds created by vicious power-hungry people who misinterpret religious teachings and ethnic differences, preventing the creation of violence and untold suffering on people and extra-legal violence called terrorism, as well as preventing legalized state terrorism within nations and between nations.

Since 1945, UNESCO has done much to bring Universal Education and basic literacy (reading, writing and numeral skills) to every part of the world. Yet, the illiteracy rate is still low in Asia, Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean. Most illiterate

people live in poor countries, while several million are said to live in rich societies. Functional illiteracy is high everywhere. We have to work simultaneously in the provision of universal primary education for children as well as the provision of basic skills training for adults. Through special schools, new curricula and training programs, we have to educate people on the reality of the present world situation. Education is a pathway through which people can become a part of the solution rather than remaining as objects of charity, dole-outs and continuing exploitation. There is a historic role to play at this time for individuals who look at education as an awakening process of individuals, families, communities, nations and the humanity as a whole rather than another avenue to make money.

The only form of employment I have ever experienced was my employment while teaching. I enjoyed the profession very much. I loved to be with my students. We received very paltry salaries those days, but I never complained or gave private tuition classes to our students or charged fees from them. We had exceptionally gifted educationists as the heads of our schools. They were men and women of highest integrity, and politicians never approached them for favors. Even the ministers who were in charge of the subject of education were uncorrupt men of principles and were very respectful of the principals and teachers. There was complete academic freedom where the teachers could employ many creative activities to enrich education. We had the freedom of expression even to criticize government policies if the policies according to our estimation were detrimental to the people's welfare.

It was in an environment of this nature over fifty years ago that the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement was born and was initially led by teachers and students of Nalanda College in Colombo.

This Movement was founded by a team all of whom were teachers, educators and educationists. I may have been one of the youngest, but others were men and women of highest eminence in the field of education, social welfare, religion, law and justice, and even economic science. There were a couple

of political leaders who also were statesmen of the highest stature. We had weekly meetings in my home in Maradana where we critically evaluated what we were doing in the fields of education at all levels: primary, secondary, tertiary, and the university level. Our education included non-formal, informal, vocational and community education.

We discussed the weaknesses in the educational system. This system was undergoing rapid change after the introduction of swabhasha (mother tongue) as the medium of instruction, the takeover of private schools by the government, the changing of the teaching of science and mathematics to swabhasha and the building of a national educational policy for an independent Ceylon (Sri Lanka). In the context of a sudden switch of medium of administration to Sinhala-only education, and then the switch back to a reasonable use of Tamil as a medium of administration, we in the field of education had much to deliberate upon in order to prevent extreme social upheavals and also to heal the wounds that were created as a result of sudden changes which were brought about by national political decisions.

We agreed on a basic definition of education. We defined education as an awakening process of the personality of a human being. It begins as the individual is conceived in the mother's womb and unfolds itself right through until the child is born. From that point onwards, the personality awakening takes place influenced by, as we believe, the karmic factor, the environmental factor and the mind factor. The environmental and mind factors can influence the human being's personality and even change the negative consequences of the karmic factor. Education is the totality of the methods and techniques adapted by the civilized society to bring about positive changes. In education there exists a philosophical content and also evolving methodologies and institutional forms around which all other tools and equipment are added.

Sarvodaya's approach extended from the awakening of human personality to family personality, to all types of group personalities, to village or urban community personalities, and then to national and world community personality awakening.

It was our contention that we should revive our traditional Buddhist and Hindu value system. In our country where all strata of the society were affected, we aimed to implement programs at all of these levels of awakening so that we could help mitigate the adverse effects brought about by rapid policy changes in our country.

We could not achieve much at the school level because at that time textbooks and classrooms were examination-oriented and were not granted the flexibility to try new experiments and innovations. Because of that, we had to organize educational extension and community service work camps (shramadana camps) in remote villages during weekends and vacations with students and teachers who volunteered to participate. Just during the first decade itself, thousands of participants learned to live and work with poverty-stricken village communities in hundreds of villages all over Sri Lanka. This movement succeeded in breaking all barriers that existed between castes, racial and ethnic groups, linguistic and religious communities, classes and even the urban-rural divide as well as geographical boundaries. These students and teachers, together with their rural counterparts, and all members of the community, men, women and children, gifted their labor, knowhow, wealth and resources for the common wellbeing of the village. New access roads, new village water reservoirs, new irrigation canals, wells, wattle and daub houses, preschools, community centers and even school buildings were built in these camps without any cost to the government. Here was an example of how to link the school with the community and how to merge education with development.

The hidden potential of people's strength for self-reliance and community participation surfaced, and people became less dependent on the government and other external resources. This self-development initiative swept across these communities and adjacent villages, but the governments in power neglected these villages. Governments at the time did not believe in people's participation in their own self-development. They promoted more dependence. In addition to the benefits young students gained, whole communities became learning groups,

not just for literacy, but more so to master methods and techniques that help communities to overcome their poverty and powerlessness.

Sarvodaya can boldly claim that it has discovered the non-violent constructive path to awaken poor communities from organized greed, hatred and ignorance; this is a path to beneficence, love and enlightenment. If we are to dispel evil from this land, this may be the only possible way. Today after fifty years of continuous service to the community, the Sarvodaya Movement is helping 15,000 village communities in Sri Lanka to build a society of their own using villagers' spiritual, moral, cultural, social and economic values.

The story of this movement developing from an educational experiment to a community development model, and today evolving itself as a non-violent people's revolutionary movement for total transformation, is a long process and full of joy and sadness. It is joyful because in spite of all the obstacles placed before us and the sufferings we were subjected to, we in Sarvodaya are very close to the minds and hearts of all right-thinking people in the country, especially the most victimized and neglected people in this country. We do not expect any word of thanks or encouragement from corrupt politicians, bureaucrats or greedy multinationals that for their own benefit, together create conflicts, destroy all of our valuable natural resources, and disrupt our educational and other worthwhile social and economic enterprises. Worst of all, the damage they do to social relationships is really a critical factor in the promotion of crime in our country.

We at Sarvodaya are sad because after those good politicians, educationists and civil servants were gone, most of those who succeeded them were petty thieves of ideas and national wealth, and were backboneless individuals who would sacrifice anything for their personal gain. If only we were encouraged to integrate the successes we made into the school curriculum, adapt community development methodologies and techniques, perfect and sympathetically consider the national development philosophy we advanced, this country could be great by now.

We never would have degenerated into the present ethnic divide, terrorism and war, economic chaos, educational mess, bribery and corruption in every conceivable sector. Pettiness and small minds of those who ruled this country and decision-makers in other sectors caused this chaos from which Sarvodaya is still trying to make a breakthrough (even at a time when we see a breakdown face-to-face). Let us all join hands to reverse the downward trends in our societies and build a world that works for all.

From Inner Peace to Outer Peace

World Buddhist Assembly

Tokyo, Japan
November 12th-17th, 2008

As a Buddhist I take refuge in the Noble Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha). May I wish you all the blessings of the Triple Gem.

At the outset I would like to thank Ven. Jin Hitoshi for enabling my assistant and me to participate in this important World Buddhist Assembly. We also appreciate Ven. Hitoshi's very valuable contributions in relief, rehabilitation and reconciliation that have supplemented our post-tsunami Sarvodaya activities in Sri Lanka. I would also like to thank Mr. Jonathan Watts for the logistical support that he gave for us to come here today.

Some organize protests and demonstrations, shout slogans, carry banners and posters, and even engage in activities that are far from peaceful in the name of peace to protest against war. But, as much as there are people who are against war, there are people who are for war for whatever reason. When these two groups meet in the field and advocate their positions, they themselves create a situation that sometimes ends up in conflict, violence and bloodshed. In situations like this, even law enforcement forces are called in to maintain law and order.

We in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement follow a completely different path. We believe that peace cannot be built with non-peaceful means. We always believe that to achieve good ends, good means must be used. So, in peace building, we follow a course of action where our inner peace becomes the foundation on which outer peace is built. For over fifty years now we in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement have followed a course of action to bring about peace in our minds first, followed by peace in our society and then peace in our environment.

The first two stanzas in the Dhammapada emphasize the supremacy of the mind in all of our thoughts, words and actions. Whatever is done with a defiled mind will result in adverse consequences while that which is done with a pure mind will result in good consequences. If we are to be practicing Buddhists, we have to abstain from all evil, cultivate good and strive to purify our minds. Even in peace building, it is important

to cultivate peace in our minds before we try to bring about peace in others.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement was started fifty years ago by a group of students and teachers from a leading Buddhist College in Sri Lanka. These teachers and students ventured into one of the poorest villages in Sri Lanka to live and work with the community to improve living conditions based on the community's own effort. The literal meaning of Sarvodaya Shramadana is that by sharing labor and resources (shramadana) we can bring about the welfare and the awakening of all (sarvodaya). During that first shramadana camp, the country was very peaceful and no one resorted to violence to remedy grievances. So, the principal goal of our organization at the time we started the movement was to broaden the educational experience of our children in the classroom and extend education beyond textbooks and examinations to the living community, the broader world environment and life experiences.

We placed before the students four objectives that they should achieve for individual personality awakening and four objectives that they should achieve for their group or community awakening. These objectives have to be kept in mind when living and working with a community during a shramadana camp, and these admonitions are from Buddha's teachings. The first is the four brahma viharas or sublime abodes. From the brahama viharas we learn that it is always important to cultivate metta or loving kindness towards all beings (the poor and powerless village people being foremost in our minds). Second, we know to make it foremost in our state of mind to do no harm to any sentient being when working with or serving people, whether it be while building a water supply scheme or constructing a school, community center or medical clinic. We also know that all those actions become compassionate actions or actions of karuna, the second brahma vihara. When one successfully completes a shramadana task, mutidtha or dispassionate joy comes to mind; this is the third brahma vihara. The fourth brahma vihara is upekkha, or equanimity. This can be developed in one's mind through community service; when

you do community service one has to learn to face things with equal detachment, loss, gain, success or failure.

The satara sangraha vastu are the four principles of group conduct that have to be kept in mind and cultivated. These four are sharing (dana), pleasant language (priya vacana), constructive action (arthacharya) and equality in association (samanathmatha).

When hundreds or sometimes thousands of us work together in shramadana activities as members of one human family transcending all barriers of cast, race, religion, creed and nationality, we physically achieve something great. We physically achieve something great for the community that is important in and of itself, such as a new irrigation tank or a canal, a new road to the village, trees and so on. But, what is more important to us is the enrichment of the individual and collective consciousness of our students and people. Shramadana is the practical action that enables participation and provides an environment for people to practice the four sublime abodes and the satara sangrha vastu. We expect that 'inner peace' thus generated in this limited space and time is carried over into daily life as well. People should feel this kind of happiness of 'inner peace' in order know it and to strive continuously to achieve and sustain it.

We put these two sets of spiritual principles that are taught by the Buddha into practice through the five precepts. These five precepts (panca sila) get naturally imbibed into our day-to-day life. These precepts involve having faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and not violating the panca sila. The practices that qualify us to be practicing Buddhists are abstinence from taking life, thieving, sexual misconduct, lying and consuming intoxicants. It is from here that we have to develop higher forms of sila (morality or discipline), samadhi (concentration) and pragna (wisdom). In actual practice, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka has developed into a social awakening force where the traditional value systems are reawakened while people's basic needs are at the same time satisfied through self-reliance and community participation. The Movement has

paved a way for a balanced kind of development where the outer material needs as well as inner spiritual needs of people are simultaneously satisfied.

From the very inception of Sarvodaya, those who participated in our village development activities were not just Buddhists. Hindus, Christians and Muslims also participated in our work. After several years of service, we found that Sarvodaya works well in villages belonging to all communities. When the first signs of communal disharmony between Sinhala and Tamil people surfaced in the mid-1950s and was aggravated during 1958-1960, the Sarvodaya Movement started its first community amity programs to prevent further deterioration of the situation and to prevent communal disturbances. We took train loads of people from the south (mostly Sinhala and Muslim people) to the Tamil areas of the north. We conducted joint shramadana camps that generally lasted one week each.

Similarly, people from the north were brought to the south for shramadana projects. We tried our utmost to prevent the two communities from building a divide at the national level, even though shortsighted national policy decisions were made on the part of politicians. We partly succeeded in keeping sustained friendly relationships between the two communities, as they were both followers of Sarvodaya. But, we could not prevent strained political relationships that continued to worsen and result in several Tamil groups taking up arms and waging a war against the government in their desire for a separate state. This war lasted twenty-five years, and even today, the foremost among the rebel groups, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) is waging a fierce war against the government. The bonds of brotherhood we built among the Sarvodaya Sinhala and Tamil communities is sustaining us through the conflict.

The first twenty-five years of the Sarvodaya Movement evolved in a relatively peaceful national environment. During this period, the Movement succeeded in developing one of the world's best-integrated community development programs that is recognized by the UN and her specialized bodies, the World Bank and other such global institutions and governments.

When the civil disturbances broke out into a full-scale civil war, the terrorist attacks by suicide bombers affected not only the people of the north and the east, but also the people of the south. Sarvodaya carefully strategized in order to sustain the already-established amity between the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities in the Sarvodaya villages in the north, east and south. Sarvodaya did this by using its physical and social infrastructure to bring about as much assistance as possible to victims of war in all parts of the country. The organization did this in order to finally work toward a lasting solution to this violent situation. This solution was to build a Sarvodaya strategy for lasting peace.

The second twenty-five years of the Sarvodaya Movement was about working and evolving in the midst of an atmosphere of communal unrest, mutual fear and increasing coercive power of the government. We faced terrorist violence, lost civil rights, were restrained in our movements and faced increased economic hardships amidst so many other difficulties. We were not disheartened because our motivation for Sarvodaya originated from Buddha and his teachings. In most cases, the Bodhisattva idea we believed in made us look at these challenges as opportunities to practice the ten perfections (paramitas). These are dana (beneficence or giving), sila (discipline or morality), nekkhamma (renunciation), pragna (wisdom), viriya (effort), khamthi (patience), sacca (truth), adhittana (determination), metta (loving kindness) and upekkha (equanimity).

When the worst ever communal violence occurred in our country in 1983, we in Sarvodaya went into immediate action to protect and help the affected people. We called this assistance our 5R program. The first 'R' is for relief. We collected food, clothing, water, first aid, temporary shelter material, and whatever other available and useful things in the spirit of dana and rushed to the scene where the victims and violence were.

The second 'R' is for rehabilitation. This rehabilitation was both physical and psychosocial because the affected were in a state of shock or trauma. We had to understand this and interact with those affected with the utmost care and compassion.

Also, we tried to find separate accommodation for families in their temporary shelters, and we tried especially to provide the maximum privacy, health and sanitary needs for women and children. While I outwardly, fearlessly and compassionately engaged myself in this 5R work, I never forgot that I was engaged in fulfilling inward Bodhisattva ideals. I reminded my colleagues of this as they sometimes were exclusively absorbed in this charitable work and were forgetting their own personality awakening that should have been taking place simultaneously.

The third 'R' is for reconciliation. One needed to make relief and rehabilitation also an opportunity to bring about reconciliation among different ethnic and religious groups. So, Sarvodaya teams consisted of volunteers belonging to different faiths and races. These teams organized various educational and training programs for the affected so that these people too became an integral part of the peace-making effort. The fourth 'R' is for reconstruction. Sarvodaya assisted these people to reconstruct their lives and communities when these people returned to their former homes or were given new lands by the government. The fifth 'R' is for reawakening. This is the stage when these communities were more or less like normal villages. We helped and are still helping these villages by guiding them through the Sarvodaya five-stage, village-awakening program.

We used this 5R methodology for twenty-five years to assist victims of communal violence, war and also the tsunami of December 2004. We used this formula with great success even at other times of disaster (in response to floods, hurricanes and droughts). All this was done while the main Sarvodaya program was implemented in 15,000 villages. We believe that what has and is happening in these villages will one day lay the foundation for the building of a new society that works for all, transcends all man-made barriers, and keeps with Buddha's teaching of sabbe satta bhavantu sukhitatta (may all sentient beings be well and happy).

Even though civil war in Sri Lanka continues in the Wanni area of the northern districts, the eastern province has been placed back under the control of the government. A former rebel leader

has been elected as the chief minister under the democratic process of a provincial council election. The government has launched a rapid reconstruction program. This all shows great improvement, but kidnappings, killings and disappearances in the province continue. The new provincial rulers and people are suffering from nearly three decades of lawlessness and violence so they will need some more time to adjust to democratic governance under the rule of law. The Sarvodaya Movement is very active in the eastern province and is working in several hundred villages there to help communities return to pre-conflict normalcy.

With exception of the Mulativu and Kilinochchi districts where we have suspended our work temporarily, Sarvodaya is doing nonviolent and constructive work all over the north with the limited resources and space we have. Sarvodaya has a fifty-year track record of impartial and non-sectarian community service, so neither the government forces nor the LTTE is obstructing Sarvodaya work. We cannot wait until the war is over so that we can think of, plan out and try to build a society in which resorting to violence to solve people's problems will no longer be necessary. We have to repair the damage that has been done to people's lives, the damage that has been done to their belongings, their social relationships and their social institutions. But, we even need to go beyond our 5R healing to work for long-term social healing.

While our programs and activities to build inner peace are still needed, these activities are no longer sufficient. The consolidation of outer peace requires that we address other issues that are faced by people in their daily life, issues in the system of governance under which they live, and also issues in the economic system that is depleting the resources of people and the earth. While people may gain more and more control over their own minds, they appear to be powerless to address the current political and economic systems that are leading the human species and other life to extinction.

We are not disheartened by this emerging scenario because we are keeping with the four sublime abodes. Our response is one

of strengthening programs for inner peace by integrating them with well-designed and practical programs that also empower people in the political and economic spheres. We refer to our new approach as the transformation of the consciousness of all the people and the transformation of the economy and power structures under which they now live.

This transformation has to take place simultaneously with full participation of people in the rural and urban communities. The Sarvodaya Movement is now implementing this program with support and resources of the 15,000 Sarvodaya villages. We are determined to build spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political processes and programs in these villages according to the guiding principles we find in Buddha's teachings.

In the last five decades of development work in communities, Sarvodaya has in fact attended to these three major spheres of activity (consciousness, economy and power) in one way or another. What is new in the emerging Sarvodaya strategy is the elevation of the community development activities to higher levels. Also new is the better coordination and integration of a holistic development program with communities themselves forming into effective and sustainable networks for desirable change. This is a tall order and not something we have achieved yet. But, it is a goal we are dedicated to achieve. There is no need for me to expound the Buddha's views to you. Instead, I will now take a little time to illustrate our practical approach that is based on Buddha's teachings.

We have developed Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services in over 5,000 of our villages during the last two and a half decades. These services are based on Buddha's teachings. This is the largest people's savings, credit, microenterprise and community banking program in Sri Lanka. One of the main causes of poverty in Sri Lanka is the lack of economic opportunities. When people are economically empowered and have equal opportunities to improve themselves, there is a lesser tendency for these people to take to crimes, robberies, bribery, corruption, civil disturbances and war. Under our SEEDS program we now have several hundred

communities that are legal entities under our current law and have considerable financial assets of their own. These entities are legally independent of the Sarvodaya Sangamaya. The link between the Sarvodaya headquarters and these village societies is that we all subscribe to similar objectives that stem from the four sublime virtues and the santara sangraha vastu. We hope to link these societies together.

Various units of the Sarvodaya Sangamaya continue to engage in peace marches, peace mediations and organize amity camps to join different ethnic and religious groups together. We have a newly created institution called Vishva Niketan that takes our work in the sphere of consciousness to a deeper level. Vishva Niketan extends on these peace programs but also supports new programs conducted at the community level and additionally carries out programs in other institutions like prisons. Vishva Niketan programs are generally referred to as Meth Sith Sabendiyo (Association of Those Whose Minds are Full of Loving Kindness). While some of these programs and activities are conducted at Vishva Niketan, our new strategy is to train and select community youth who will conduct these activities in their own communities, thus extending our reach. We now have tried and tested activities on this concept for pregnant mothers, school children, community youth, elders, etc. These activities in the sphere of consciousness are now accompanied by other sets of activities from the economic and other spheres.

Our work in the sphere of power has recently taken a significant leap as a result of our prior achievements. We now have thousands of community associations that are registered under the law and recognized as legal entities. These entities have the right to sue and be sued, enter into contracts, open bank accounts, run savings and credit schemes for members, etc. We hope to utilize new information technology to facilitate this process. So far these communities have acted in some isolation without sometimes knowing what another community is doing. Now they are provided with opportunities to come together to ask and answer questions about how they can discuss some of their economic problems, how they can avert

a food crisis and ensure food security for their communities, etc. For example, there is talk of a food store internationally in the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries. Perhaps it is possible for communities to have their own food store from which purchases could be made by the needy in some medium of exchange other than the depreciating currency that communities do not control. Perhaps a group of communities can look after their food and energy needs in a sustainable way. These are challenge we hope to put before the Sarvodaya communities. We believe that they will respond by taking the spheres of economics, consciousness and power into consideration.

There were many occasions when Buddha gave valuable advice and praise to the kings and rulers. The Buddha was of special praise to Vajjins and Litchavis for their adherence to principles of good governance (saptha aparihaniya dharma). These principles included meeting regularly, meeting peacefully, discussing peacefully, dispersing peacefully, giving priority to the protection and safety of children, welcoming spiritual and educated leaders, listening closely, and so on. These principles are relevant to modern political problems today.

Sarvodaya is working with these principles through village self-governance programs (called gram swaraj by Mahatma Gandhi) in over 3,000 villages. We are convinced that this is the answer to the centralized power politics that has led to people taking up arms in order to win rights. Now people can build a participatory, democratic political base and advocate for their rights through the gram swaraj system.

In conclusion, I will say that the teachings of the Buddha are as relevant today as they were 2,600 years ago. We can skillfully follow the footsteps of the Buddha and practice the Noble Eight-Fold Path for our own personal enlightenment and also to contribute to peace and harmony in our societies. We should not build barriers between others and ourselves. The four sublime abodes, the principles of social conduct, and the ten principles that aspirants to Buddha-hood should follow (brahma viharas, sangraha vastus, paramitas) and the Noble Eightfold

Path are all bridges that join our hearts together with other humans and the living world in our quest to build inner as well as outer peace.

Spiritual Development and Good Governance

Keynote Address

*South Asian Good Governance Academy Degree Awarding
Ceremony*

April 4th, 2009

Introduction

On this occasion of the South Asian Good Governance Academy Degree Awarding Ceremony, I take this opportunity of expressing my warm appreciative thanks to Mr. Chandraratne Bandara, the executive director of this academy, for inviting me to deliver the keynote address. I knew him as a youth and was well aware of and in agreement with the concepts and moral principles he upheld. I was left with no other alternative but to accept the invitation. More than one thousand creative ideas dawned on me at the very mention of spiritual development and good governance. I use this occasion to place before you some of these ideas. Given the depth of meaning, spiritual development and good governance cannot be separated from one another.

We can learn to become aware of the sensation that feed our consciousness, a consciousness that we carefully guard for our wellbeing. These sensation are taken through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body. This process facilitates the stopping of additional thought formations from the already-crowded consciousness. This can be done by being constantly aware of the outside stimulations and realizing how these stimulations come into contact with the five senses and produce various states of mind. One can immediately identify formations that have been lodged in the mind but surface through awareness. If these already lodged formations are unwholesome, they should become discarded thoughts. In my view, spiritual development is highest form of self-control. It is about being mindful from moment to moment and keeping a pure mental state.

Philosophical doctrines and religions helped mankind in spiritual development at various stages of evolution. The sun, the moon, the planets, the stars, fire, water, the plant kingdom, the belief in gods and the belief in beings without form all influenced the creation of civilization. All of these activated concepts of the spiritual component of development. All of us living in Sri Lanka have been greatly influenced by Buddhism. It is the accepted fact that our civilization was enriched by the integration of basic principles of Buddhist philosophy into the way of life of the people. It was the common belief, especially

of people living in the 3rd century to the 10th century A.D., that the rulers of Sri Lanka should not only be Buddhist, but Bodhisattva too. People expected their kind to conform to the ten virtues that people should abide by (dasa paramitha) and that a Bodhisattva is expected to fulfill. Even when Tamil kings ruled Sri Lanka, they accepted these traditions of Sinhala Buddhist rulers on principle.

Spirituality

There is no doubt whatsoever that when people accept spiritual development as the main objective of their lives, the result is good governance. When people are fortified with self-discipline and rule a country, their administration results in good governance. History does not reveal that all the past rulers were embodiments of these Bodhisattva virtues, but the common acceptance is that these virtues were necessary social features of good governance. Although the majority of the population paid more attention to rituals and traditional activities, Sri Lanka's history tells us that there were benevolent kings who, while devoting themselves in spiritual development, were true practitioners of good governance. We need to emulate the great personalities who connected the development of spirituality to good governance.

So far, I've tried to focus on the fact that it is a deception to believe that good governance is possible without spirituality. Just look at the past two decades. Over a long period of time, unbelievable exhaustive methods were employed to amass great wealth to feed greed by way of the capitalist system. Embodied in this greed is hatred and this hatred paved way to a military buildup. During our lifetime, we witnessed two major wars and many wars of lesser magnitude that were very harmful. In 1945, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings in Japan claimed the lives of approximately 250,000. During the past ten years, about 30,000 people in Japan committed suicide; this bears testimony to a capitalist system that is falling apart. In fact, the disastrous atomic bomb deaths were less than 30,000 deaths per month. The lesson we learn is that devoid of a spiritual base, no economic or political system can sustain itself. If it does, its survival is only temporary.

Morality

Moral and cultural stability greatly influence the spiritual development of an individual, family, community or nation. The moral values we consider are embedded in the five precepts and are well rooted in our society. These values help in the upward spiritual journey of a great majority of people, as they provide a very conducive atmosphere for spiritual development.

Certain countries do not pay much attention to killing, stealing, adultery, lying and alcohol consumption even though the attendant evils these practices bring about are unquestionable. Some countries may treat these evils as anti-social deeds, but not de-meritorious deeds. Countries often conclude that satisfaction of the five sense desires is the main purpose in life. However, killing (for example) is a sin that produces a bad karmic effect. Societies that disregard killing may not be conscious of the fact that people are born and re-born. These societies may be ignorant of the notion that this life is not the last life and that actions in this life influence birth and life in lives to come. In short, societies need to be reminded that there is cause and there is effect.

Culture

This is a combination of everything we have been accumulating over a period of time in order to satisfy our physical, mental, intellectual, spiritual and emotional needs. Everything is entwined in culture. I consider the habits, behavioral patterns, attire, food, housing, entertainment, sports, irrigation systems, agriculture, dancing, music, art, literature and architecture all added together to form culture. A way of life (society) is a mixture of spirituality, morality and culture. Anuradhapura stands out as having had an ideal society. People living in Anuradhapura's golden era fully understood the ideal society they lived in. It may be that this ideal society did not bear fruit under certain kings, but the kings who possessed spiritual development and moral maturity found no difficulty in the creation of an ideal society. I have to bring up this evidence of an ideal society connected with spirituality and good governance because the pundits who are influenced by the western ways of thinking ridicule us by saying that the ideal society is only a

utopian idea. It may be that a king did not rule following the ten virtues. However, no one can refute the embodiment of the ten virtues in successful governance.

The development of spirituality, morality and culture is not static in any society. Political, economic and societal situations can determine the state of development. As much as we need to possess a clear knowledge about moral, cultural and spiritual values, we need also to be well aware of the social, economic and political arenas. Harmonious living, peace and prosperity depend on how well these six components are blended.

Social development

The significant features of a socially developed, law-abiding society are that people receive respect, acceptance, and equality of treatment and that they are also able to exercise their rights in their daily lives. There may be differences in caste, creed, class, faith and language in any society. But, we can call a society a developed society when people accept these differences, recognize equality and respect among themselves and enjoy life to the fullest. This does not happen automatically.

Equality

The social practice concept of the equal treatment of people was born with the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka. Buddha's teachings clearly show that human beings are equal; the differences between people are related to people's actions and deeds. Buddha's teachings go beyond the concept of equality and categorically proclaim that all beings, human and animal, have a right to protect their lives. The teachings of Buddha on re-birth further reinforce this concept. Although a person may be born a human being in this birth, he may take a different form in another birth. During these many births, each being may have relationships with one another. Thus, there can be many relationships during many births (samsara).

Respect for life

It is essential that concepts such as equality be inculcated in the

minds of people during social development. The basic principle that is taught by Sarvodaya development education institutes is respect and protection of human and animal life. Sarvodaya philosophy also extends this concept to the plant kingdom and also to nature as a whole.

Interactions

The second principle in social development includes interaction between human beings, and respect for nature, animals and the plant kingdom. The decline of social development can well be understood by observing the interaction between husband and wife, employer and employee, teacher and pupil. People in Sri Lanka consider performing their duties more important than claiming rights. The duties of parents towards their children take precedent over children's duties towards parents, etc. The Singalowada Sutra explains these interactions in detail.

Dependency and interconnectedness between human beings surface another value, which is noble sharing. We call it dana, the act of giving. I am keen to give this dana a broader meaning that encompasses the fulfillment of needs that include sharing.

Education

The third principle important in social development is education; this includes the formal education system, the informal education system and the non-formal education system. Schools and other education institutions train children according to a designed syllabus; this is formal education. The experience of a group of people devoting their time and energies to serve the community in a certain way is a form of education that is outside the formal education system but still beneficial. It can be cited as an example of the informal education system. Then comes non-formal education. This system is what people encounter in day-to-day life. Learning in day-to-day life is about how people respond to situations and the lessons they learn from these situations. What we see and hear teaches us. A wise way of absorbing the knowledge that we acquire is to discard what is unwholesome and retain the essentially worthwhile ideas. These worthwhile ideas will remain in us throughout life and enrich our existence.

In my view, experiences from conception, extending to childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age influence the individual in a very big way. Presently, the unwholesome experiences have a major impact and some daily papers, books, magazines, radio, television, and public posters aid in the creation of unwholesome mindsets. From this, youth can get misdirected and misinformed. There are laws that attempt to protect against this, but there is very little that these laws can do about these unscrupulous actions. I feel that there should be two more areas for social development.

Community education

Next, I introduce the community education system. It is an entirely different system and process that isolates a person and helps the individual to develop personality. The community is viewed as a whole, and necessary advice and guidance is provided for community and individual wellbeing and prosperity. Here is an example. It is essential that young couples should know what married life is like prior to marriage. This is very valuable service that is rendered by Rev. Dr. Mervyn Fernando of the Subodhi Institute, Piliyandala. Dr. Fernando advises couples on what their new life will be like and on what needs are to be abandoned and what needs are to anchor their lives.

Likewise, the couple should be fully aware of their conduct during the mother's pregnancy. According to Buddhist belief, conception takes place as a result of a karmic force. During the pregnancy period, the emotions, physical health and mental state of the mother all influence the fetus. Normal education does not provide details about the baby inside the womb and the fetus' reaction to its mother's actions. Community awareness programs on this topic should be made popular. One of Vishva Niketan's programs titled "Holistic Approach to Motherhood" is conducted by Dr. Upali Marasinghe and is popular island-wide. This program is aimed at producing a mentally and physically healthy baby. Dr. Marasinghe has synthesized information from ancient Buddhist scripture and given this information to pregnant mothers and expectant fathers. This information teaches parents how they can best organize themselves to grow and receive a new arrival of a physically and mentally

healthy baby; he teaches them how to receive this gift to the world. Meditation on loving-kindness is one thing he teaches. I would like to also re-iterate here the importance of introducing community education programs that are similar to Dr. Upali Marasinghe's program, but suitable for pre-school and school-age children, adolescents, adults and senior citizens.

Development education

The next category under social development is development education. Development is a word that is often used by the government, UN agencies, various voluntary and various private organizations. The meaning given to development by the western world does not suit our society at all. This meaning of development is limited to the development of only the economic sector. This western notion of economic development includes limitless gratification of the five senses; towards this end it is admissible to deplete natural resources in a quest satisfy justifiable desires as well as unnecessary desires. Western societies often make use of resources within their own country as well as natural and human resources of other countries. They introduce globalization to maintain their product monopolies, commercial companies, banks and financial frameworks to support limitless gratification at the expense of others.

The western notion of development is about measuring development pace using the tools of per capita income, GNP, share market position and so on. This is conducive to greed. The result is environmental pollution, climate change, eroding of natural resources, the widening of the gap between the people who have and those who have not, internal conflicts, war and the production of arms. This economic system began to collapse in the USA and in Europe during the first decade of the 21st century. The entire world was affected and the entire world saw the downfall of this economic system. The backbone of this kind of development was not just limited to giant technologies and massive products. This backbone also included bribery, corruption and fraud. Additionally, the leadership given for this type of development was given by the private sector and by political parties.

Non-governmental organizations

Voluntary organizations are a headache to the private sector and to corrupt political parties (the very political parties that are supported by some sections of the media and have been charged for fraud). Although the headache and concern is not just directed towards small-scale voluntary death benefit societies, village committees, small social service organizations, deaf and blind societies, refugees, welfare societies, village development societies or community development services, all of these organizations fall under the umbrella of NGO.

There is no harm done whatsoever in justifiable criticism. It is legitimate for the government to suggest a fair path for organizations that thrive only on foreign donations and are unable to think independently or are involved in anti-social activities. We at Sarvodaya approve of taking legal action against organizations, political parties and international non-governmental organizations that support and promote dividing the country and converting people from one religion to another. But, I wish to let these unreasonable critics of NGOs know about well-meaning NGOs that help and bring solace to sections of the community that even the governments do not reach. Underestimation of this work is a national crime.

There is a category of NGOs that are lawfully registered entities with the government. Some of these organizations support good governance and expose public and private sector corruption and fraud. We are obliged to accept these organizations and their work, so long as they provide a place for truth, do not help to activate unrest and violence, and do not directly or indirectly act against a democratically elected government. These NGOs are entitled to show shortcomings of the systems.

In this regard, please let me say a word about Sarvodaya. Sarvodaya is a non-violent revolutionary movement that has been active in Sri Lanka for over half a century. It serves the Sri Lankan population from the village up to the international level, abiding by the traditions of the country and working for the well-being of all. It rejects party and power politics. It works beyond

caste, race, religion and class differences. It rejects western capitalism and Marxist philosophy that ignores spiritual values. It also rejects other materialistic philosophies that ignore spiritual values. Sarvodaya continuously works toward building a new society that is fortified with spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political values. We consider the critics who put Sarvodaya under the umbrella as not only traitors to the nation, but also ignorant enemies of a peaceful society in the making. We will not enter into an argument with them, but instead invite them to see what we are doing. The majority of our critics suffer from jealousy and fear (ehipassiko).

The prevalent formal education system has provided human resources and technology that has contributed to the above-mentioned development system. However, Sri Lanka and the world need an entirely different system. My understanding is that development is a progressive path through which the individual personality, family, village community, urban community, country and world are developed in areas of spirituality, morality, culture, sociology, economy and politics.

The western type of development education targets adolescents who are engaged in vocational training in various spheres. It is essential that these adolescents and also public sector employees should be given the Sarvodaya version of development education training. Both government project planners and policy decision makers at district and national levels should be given this training. Finally, the individuals who we should ignore are individuals from the corporate sector, especially from multinational companies. They should be given this training as well.

Main five-fold concepts

The ultimate aim of providing development education in the above categories is to put the following concepts into the mindset of the people.

1. The realization that all our development activities should culminate in a peaceful and harmonious life at individual, family, community, and national levels.
2. Our development plans should not benefit only a

- minority; the needs of the entire community should be fulfilled.
3. It should be our target to provide a no-poverty, no-affluence lifestyle for everyone.
 4. In our development efforts, care should be taken to abstain from polluting the air, water, trees, biodiversity, natural resources and also to prevent misuse of human resources and climate change.
 5. The reason for the unfortunate degradation of economic, political and other sectors is the great importance that is given to money. Money is a means of exchanging goods and services and not a measuring mechanism of the virtue of a human being. The emergence of globalization is based on money, buying and selling, and share market fluctuations that make the rich richer and the poor poorer. According to this system, efficiency and value determination are based on per capita income, GNP, share market fluctuations and the like. None of these factors add happiness to life.

The government of Bhutan officially recognizes its own measuring device titled “Gross National Happiness”. This system can also benefit other spiritually, morally and culturally rich countries. It indeed is a revolutionary effort to put the earlier mentioned five concepts in to action. Sarvodaya has used this index to measure wealth for over 40 years.

Thousands of paths need to be cleared and ‘sound traffic’ needs to be introduced to avoid the insane rush to satisfy the greed of a few at the cost of many. A system needs to be initiated that focuses on fulfilling the needs of the majority; this system needs to be a participatory system that does not eat into the capital that is introduced into the system. For this purpose, a new development administration needs to be introduced at the rural and urban levels, and then this system needs to feed into a web at the national level. It is necessary that new technologies and systems launched replace the giant technologies. The present monetary system should be totally transformed and a people-friendly monetary system needs to be introduced. All these development techniques have to have government

patronage with public participation.

Sarvodaya has, as I mentioned earlier, an alternate economic system that has succeeded at the village level and has spread to the national level. People with a very shallow knowledge of economic prosperity, who survive on day-to-day existence only, may feel that Sarvodaya's targets are unachievable targets. But this is not so. When looking at what Sarvodaya has experimented with over the past five decades, one can see that good governance embedded into Sarvodaya economics results in effective change that is leading to the eradication of poverty.

Politics

If we are to transform our existing political systems for better governance, there are certain weaknesses we have to correct. I will mention four of these here.

1. There are limitless powers of governance exercised by executive members of the government.
2. Among these powers are decision-making authorities that largely pertain to financial, natural and human resources. However, the powers of authority that concern themselves with these subjects lack equal responsibilities.
3. As there are mega-scale authorities that lack transparency, human weakness by those making poor decisions can lead to injustice, bribery, corruption and fraud.
4. Most people have no opportunity to participate in their own governance, except for a few moments during a general election.

If we are to overcome the above weaknesses, we have to create political structures that are very close to the people. The village and city self-governing units are the political institutions close to the people. We have to trust and believe in these units. We can name these as grama swarajya, nagara swarajya or praja swarajya (village awakening, urban awakening, community awakening) units. These units can be networked and coordinated with similar self-governing communities nationally.

With a system like this, all communities in the country can enjoy true freedom and become participants in their own governance. They can do this while at the same time preserving their traditional cultural or racial value systems. I believe that the factions who demand Eelam or those who stand firmly for a unitary state or devolution of power will also readily agree to a people-centered or people's participatory system of this nature.

Before I conclude, I should say something about the political revolution we should bring about in our country. It is my firm belief that this political transformation can be brought about democratically and non-violently. This notion is not an imaginary creation or something that comes out of a dream world. This notion is founded on fifty years of concrete experience that we have gained as social activists in community development programs of the Sarvodaya Movement. If we are to continue to develop these programs and bring about good governance, it is imperative that we also have a revolutionary change in the political sector.

Because of our conscience, we cannot call the democratic systems of governance we have in region or in Sri Lanka examples of good governance. On the other hand, we cannot believe that any good governance is possible in dictatorial and undemocratic countries. It should be much easier to practice good governance in our country because our country does not have a dictatorial regime or an undemocratic form of government. What are the obstacles we have to surmount? How can we remove these obstacles? Time has come for us to pay attention to these questions.

When I came to know that your institution decided to confer on me an honorary degree, I refused to accept it as I have already been conferred several such honors and there are many others who deserve such honors. My friend, Mr. Chandraratne Bandara, insisted that I accept it and I finally agreed. In recent times due to health reasons, I cut my long distance travels and speaking engagements. But, I have come here today due to

the deep respect I have for your institution and to those who are associated with it. I will conclude by offering my many congratulations to those who are getting recognitions at this convocation. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

- Translated from The original Sinhala speech

A New Life Style for the New Era

Seminar on Practical Survival Strategies in Times of Recession
Seminar organized by the National Chamber of Commerce of
Sri Lanka

Taj Samudra Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka
May 19th, 2009

At the outset, I wish to thank Mr. Lal de Alwis, president of the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka, for inviting me to address this seminar on Practical Survival Strategies In Times Of Recession.

‘A New Life Style for the New Era’ is the theme on which I am asked to express some of my thoughts. I am very happy to have been given this subject as this is exactly the vision that we in the Sarvodaya Movement have tried to realize in practice throughout the past five decades.

I can understand your concern about the recession and for seeking practical survival strategies to work through the present difficult times. My concerns extend beyond the economic or marketing situations, perhaps because people like me are not occupied with profit-making enterprises. We take a holistic view of our planet. We look at its natural resources, sustainability of life on earth, social, economic and political structures, moral value systems and spirituality into account. The sustainability of life on earth includes the human, social, economic and political structures that serve humanity by ensuring freedom, justice and fair play for all. The moral value systems are those that we have inherited over centuries for civilized living, and spirituality is what we consider to be the essence of highest human happiness.

It is our belief that the global situation today is chaotic and we have to accept the fact that every problem we are facing is connected to all other problems. Hence, while we pay attention to the particular problem of recession, we also have to remind ourselves that it is only a part of the total problem and we cannot continue to ignore the totality of the situation. We have to go to the root cause of the problem and together look for a solution. We need to innovate a holistic approach where citizens, community organizations, businessmen, local bodies and civil society organizations play a key role in realization of solutions, while spectators, predatory financial institutions and rapacious banks are cautiously kept away from such an exercise. Many scholars point out that the present global crisis is the result of a spiritual and moral decline of the human community.

Hence, a transformation of the human consciousness should be brought about initially, followed by economic and political transformation. This crisis can be turned into a golden opportunity to create new, people-friendly institutions that prioritize the importance of human consciousness. The creation of these kinds of institutions should be followed by the creation of institutions that work towards economic and political transformation.

These are achievable goals. The Sarvodaya Movement that I represent has worked for many decades to help a considerable number of our rural communities in the successful progression of this three fold direction. As I have requested many times in the past when I was made to address your chamber, I am requesting that you again visit our headquarters in Moratuwa, spend a day personally studying firsthand what we are achieving, and learn how we are progressing in our mission of building a new society from the village upwards. If you are seriously interested in achieving a sustainable and stable economy and not just surviving these difficult times, you can learn how to adopt short-term Sarvodaya strategies. Sarvodaya is able to offer you substantial opportunities as long as you are businessmen of integrity who place human value before financial gain. I leave the choice to you because a half-an-hour presentation is hardly sufficient for you to comprehend the entire process. Ehi passiko; come and see.

I have talked about the transformation of human consciousness. However, there are many illusions embedded in human consciousness that need to be removed by educated people. Let me give an example. People are made to think that money is wealth. So, everybody is chasing after all kinds of things to acquire money. They pay little or no heed to moral principles or spiritual values in their mad rush to accumulate money by mistaking money for wealth. Producers, middlemen, buyers, sellers, businessmen and consumers are all engaged in creating real wealth. But, the real beneficiaries of all the hard work done by the rest are those who exclusively deal with money as another commodity to make more money, and as time goes on, take full control of the money. Thus, false wealth is created; this

paves the way for the collapse of national economies.

This is what happened in America when the bankers and financial institutions in Wall Street brought about the biggest ever-economic collapse in America, even though they had the full backing of the government that had given Wall Street the privilege of creating money. Those greedy CEOs and managers that received enormous personal benefits created nothing of real value. Instead, they created an illusion of a thriving economy. This in itself finally brought about a collapse in the Main Street business activities where the real wealth creation by hard-working businessmen was actually taking place. You are aware of how these businesses were starved of money needed to pay their suppliers and workers after the credit freeze. Trillions of dollars of taxpayer money was used in bailing out the culprits on the Wall Street. At the same time, the business centers of Main Street lost out and citizens lost jobs, could not pay mortgages, pay for health services or even education for their children. These citizens are those who wait for the trickle-down process to work again in order to get some relief.

Have you tried to learn some lessons from this American scenario in your deliberations and see whether anything comparable is taking place in our country? Newspapers are full of horrible stories of illegitimate financial transactions that have taken place in this country. This includes not only Sakwithi Danduvam Mudalali and such other smaller frauds, but also highly reputed economic giants that were involved in these rackets. What are the real actions that have been taken by the Central Bank and the economic advisors of the government? What actions have been taken to look into the depth of this national malaise (apart from sending teams of income tax collectors to those depositors who got cheated for their own greed and dishonesty)? Probing into income and assets of these certain individuals appears to be the only action the government has taken so far. Perhaps some depositors have taken legal action in this regard. Is it ignorance or stupidity on the part of those in authority to treat this situation lightly and ignore the root cause of this malady? We can go on looking into more examples of bribery, corruption, incompetence, abuse of authority and callousness that is

almost embedded into the consciousness of our economic and bureaucratic elites. If we can look at the solution that way, than any effort to bring about a transformation the consciousness of these elites will seem beyond people like us. On the other hand, we can view the solution in a different way. We can instead educate our non-elitist rural communities about the need to transform consciousness, economics and politics so that we can live sustainably in a free and peaceful society where we are our own decision makers.

I feel I should make use of these few minutes you have allotted for me to speak to briefly summarize what Sarvodaya is doing to meet this crisis in a holistic way. I would like to discuss how, from the level of the people upwards, we attempt to bring about a transformation in the whole society in all sectors (namely spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political).

We first begin with our individual selves and our own understandings of personal awakening. This personal awakening is from the time we get conceived in the mothers' womb and on through infancy, childhood, youth, adulthood and old age up to the dying moment when we learn to breathe out our last breath with right awareness. A human being who fails to understand the physical, mental, emotional, psychological and spiritual process that his or her own personality is going through every moment will never truly find happiness and the joy of living in this life.

We developed scientific, practical programs for all the above stages of human development. Thousands of people have benefited from these programs. We allow no man-made divisions among human beings to interfere with these learning processes. Hence, the human consciousness progressively reverts back to its original form to realize the highest goal of human evolution, the realization of the truth that all living beings are interconnected and interdependent.

The myriad of intractable global problems cannot be resolved without changing the consciousness that created these problems in the first place. It is for this reason that Sarvodaya

takes each community as a whole and organizes it into various age groups. This facilitates learning processes that result in a critical mass of transformed consciousness in the community that contributes to the building of a new economic order and a new political system. This is currently taking place in 15,000 village communities in our country at various levels of implementation.

Individuals and families living as a community in a particular ecological setting are the initial target populations that Sarvodaya is helping towards the path of self-development. The two qualities with which they begin their process of change are self-reliance and community participation; these qualities are to satisfy basic human needs. Basic needs are related to the environment, water, food, housing, healthcare, communication, energy needs, education, culture, and spiritual needs. A well-organized community of people under a trained and visionary leadership can harness traditional skills, free labor, land, and other natural and community resources to progressively fulfill one or more of their basic human needs. Access roads to villages, a tank to store water for agricultural purposes, an irrigation canal and reforestation projects are some examples of achievable goals by the community that created by pooling together of the community's own resources. No money transactions at all are necessary in this work.

Shramadana is a technique that can be adopted in poor countries and communities where the government cannot invest in infrastructure building. Shramadana also brings much more benefit to the community than the mere creation of real wealth and is an initial step for human personality awakening, family awakening, and community awakening. Even when governments can spare money to invest in these infrastructural works, this money can be used through organized community organizations for people to receive a cash income, learn saving habits, practice microcredit, learn business entrepreneurship, invest in agriculture, and provide water and sanitation and develop art and crafts in villages. Instead of politicians handing government funds over to their supporters in order to undertake contractual work for profit making, this alternative

kind of self-development work by the community is creating employment, training youth in every technological skill needed by the community and preventing money flowing out of the village.

These two steps are the start to rebuilding communities with a goal of achieving self-reliance in basic needs. The third step in the Sarvodaya community reawakening process is to enable the community to undertake its own democratic control money needed in their day-to-day economic and other transactions. Sarvodaya Economic Enterprise Development Service Unit was started and was later incorporated under existing law to meet this need. By the end of the 2007-2008 financial year, SEEDS was involved with 3,916 Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies and with 1,190 Sarvodaya Development Finance Centers. The total savings to this point amounted to Rs. 3,745,301,143. The value of the loan portfolio was Rs. 3,952 Million. I will not go into detail of the enterprises that were created and the employment that was generated by SEEDS services. The main point I want to make is that our communities are capable of handling their own economic management.

Unfortunately, our country not only has the ruling elites and the elite waiting to rule, but also the uniformed people who believe that the rulers are always right, that the government has to decide everything, that status quo in the economic and political systems should be maintained, that we are an undeveloped country and that we should therefore always follow on the footsteps of developed countries and that we cannot exist without foreign capital inflow. We as a country are slow to understand the reality of the national problem and these uniformed people do not favor any innovative change even if it is for their own well-being. Sarvodaya has struggled for decades in this psychological environment to help our villages learn the true nature of our society and the institutions that dominate us. Sarvodaya has worked to show the people possible nonviolent strategies that can be used to change the system for the better to work for all rather than a few privileged people. We are using twelve development educational institutions and the Sarvodaya Institute for Higher Learning at Bandaragama to provide our

community leaders with knowledge on community learning processes and forty-one specialized skills to help in this process. We have been trying for several years to get a higher legal recognition for SEEDS (such as the status of a development bank). One big barrier we are faced with is the requirement that Rs. 1.5 billion is needed as the starting capital. Only extremely rich people can meet the requirement. This prevents middle class and poor people from cooperating together to manage their community-level economy. In short, the law always favors the rich to become richer and the poor always to be subservient to the rich. Comparatively speaking, it is a proven fact that on the topic of economics that rich folk tend to be more dishonest and fraudulent than poor folk. Our existing law and economic policies have been ingeniously formulated to allow rich people to become richer. We have paid a very heavy price for this concession to the rich when we think of our children, our families, our value system, our culture, and our natural environment. The government policies should be changed to encourage members of communities to get ownership of these enterprises that exploit the poor and make the rich richer.

When a community of people are thus organized and supported by the government authorizes, they can become a part of the solution to national and global problems. This is the fourth stage of Sarvodaya's development system that originates from the bottom and moves upwards. Solar energy can be harnessed as a main source of energy for the community. Small irrigation systems and rain-catching devices can be utilized to provide people their requirements for water. Nitrogen fixation from air and recycled organic matter can be used to maintain the fertility of the soil. The control of weeds and pests can be achieved by biological means, including locally available chemicals, instead of herbicides and pesticides. Our own seed varieties can be promoted and preserved without falling prey to genetically modified seeds. Introduction of scientific methods, techniques and production and the use of alternative organic fertilizer like effective Microorganisms (EM) can be used to attract villages back to the farm in a dignified way. These practices are a recreation or a revival of collective economies and cultures that are already present in society today.

If one looks at most of our village communities, one will see that they are aimlessly floating in a visionless and mission-less manner due to an enslaved consciousness that is imposed on them by an elite class. This elite class is imitating the west. The Sarvodaya philosophy, principles and programs are a liberating force that can lead these villages to a new lifestyle and a new society. The mythical concept of growth and its measurements by GNP and such other standards will disappear from the consciousness of the new generation that will emerge from this new social system. When such communities are networked and new production and trade relationships are developed, the predatory spectators who have already invaded our real producers and consumers will not be able to have their own way. We need an economy that works for all alike and not only for the haves, the bankers, the spectators, the financiers, the corrupt, the politicians and the ambitious technocrats and bureaucrats. If we cannot transform the nature of financial institutions that are destroying our environment, depleting our non-renewable natural resources, reducing our people to dependency on government handouts and the government itself and begging from foreign countries, then we need to have the courage to do away with these institutions and create new ones.

We are meeting today after a 30-year-old terrorist apparatus is almost totally destroyed. I believe that this is the most opportune time for the government and the people of Sri Lanka to take a bold decision and radically transform the economy so that our principal production systems can run without inputs from the global system. The change should happen now so that our brave members of the armed forces can be trained to face the new economic challenges of creating real wealth. The change should happen now so that these brave members of the armed forces can be deployed to communities with the same urgency and discipline that they maintained while fighting the terrorist war. All of you are in the business to re-think your role and re-think how you can live a new lifestyle in a new era.

The fifth and the last stage of creating a new social order is when a community reaches a level of self-management of its political life. This is when we can live a contented, peaceful and

happy life. We call this a kind of democratic, participatory policy community self-governance or gramswaraj. This is the form of politics needed for the new era.

I'd like to conclude my remarks with a quote from my friend, Satish Kumar, who wrote an editorial in the Resurgence Magazine (March/April 2009) issue.

The economy of the planet must be built on the economics of place, and economics of recovery must be based on ecological and ethical values. People talk about making poverty history, but to do that, we also must make wealth history. The very wealthy are the other side of the very poor; higher mountains are bound to create deeper valleys. A culture of equilibrium requires balance, harmony, proportionality and a sense of place. Without them, we are bound to suffer boom and bust.

There are two roads to economic recovery. The first is the conventional road. This road is about bailing out the banks, fueling consumerism, putting more money into mortgages and hoping to get back to business as usual. But, the second, more genuine option is to think holistically and invest in land, agriculture, renewable energy and practical skills. The earth is our true bank. We are at a crossroads – which path are we going to choose? The answer should be obvious.

Reference:

Kumar, S. (2009 March/April). Economics of place.
Resurgence: At the Heart of Earth and Spirit, 253.

Mother Theresa – The Angel of Mercy

*Christian Alliance for Social Action,
Mother Theresa Memorial Address*

SEDEC Centre
Kynsey Road, Colombo, Sri Lanka
September 5th, 2009

I wish to begin my brief address by thanking Mr. Ainsley Joseph and his colleagues in the Christian Alliance for Social Action for inviting me to deliver this year's Mother Theresa Memorial Address. I feel honored as well as humbled by this invitation. Even to think and talk for a few minutes about a saintly human personality of the caliber of Mother Theresa is in itself a great honor. Even though we both have done some service to the poorest of the poor, I feel hardly qualified for this task when I think about the divine mission she carried out on this planet. I feel very humbled even to talk about her.

I had the good fortune to meet her first in Kotahena, Sri Lanka, and then in Calcutta when we were able to exchange a few words. I saw her at a distance on several other occasions at interreligious meetings in different countries. She was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1962. Seven years later, I was also given the same award in 1969. Thereafter, I had the opportunity to see her more often and I was determined to study her service to humanity in depth. Also, there is no doubt that she too inspired me to further dedicate my entire life to serve our fellow beings through the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka. There must be thousands of people all over the world like me who were inspired by her life and her work.

There was an article on Mother Theresa in the book "Great Men and Women of Asia". The Philippine author, Ester Dipasupil, starts with the following episode:

Once in a dream she was met by St. Peter at the gates of heaven. 'Go back,' she later recalled the saint telling her. 'There are no slums here.'

She was known as the angel of mercy, the saint of the gutters. But for many others throughout the world, she was simply Mother Theresa, the nun whose daily prayer was 'so to shine as to be a light to others.'

It is customary to briefly describe the biography of the principal personality we are commemorating during a memorial talk.

When a journalist asked Mother Theresa how she would introduce herself, Mother Theresa said:

By blood and origin I am Albanian. My citizenship is Indian. I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the whole world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the heart of Jesus.

She was born to parents of Albanian origin in Macedonia (Yugoslavia), as Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu on the 26th of August 1910. She lost her father at the tender age of eight. By the age of twelve, influenced by her very religious mother and the church group she was associated with, the seed of divinity in her heart she had inherited from birth had already started germinating. She knew her mission in life was to spread the love of Christ. She renounced her household life and left her home in Skopje to join the Sisters of Loreto in Dublin, Ireland, at the age of eighteen. By this time she had chosen her guiding saint in St. Therese of Lisieux of France who had entered the Carmelite Convent at the age of fifteen. Her motto was 'love is repaid by love alone', and she believed that holiness could be achieved through the ordinary things one does every day.

She adopted the name Sister Theresa (after her guiding saint) when she went to Calcutta, India, and she took her vows as a nun on May 24th 1931. She served as a teacher at Calcutta St. Mary's high school until she was permitted in 1948 to leave the convent and merge herself with the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta. She became Mother Theresa after her final profession from May 1937 onwards. She passed away on September 5th 1997 having left an unparalleled record of love and service to those who were unwanted, unloved, uncared for, and forgotten by everybody.

When she received the Nobel Prize in 1979 she said:

I am grateful to receive (the Nobel) in the name of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, of the crippled, of the blind, of the lepers, of all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society,

people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone.

I do not wish to describe in detail the achievements of Mother Theresa that include the establishment of her own order (the Missionaries of Charity), and several other related charitable institutions. With permission of the Holy See, these charitable institutions are working in over 123 countries to render valuable services to the most helpless human beings. Rather, I prefer to spend the rest of the short time allotted to me to mention some of the lessons we can learn from this angel of mercy in order to enrich our own lives, the lives of our fellow human beings and also the society in which we live.

First, every human being cannot lead a detached life from his or her home and exclusively devote their entire lifetime to serve those who suffer most in society. Like other congregations, Mother Theresa's sisters take a vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience and they are not allowed to serve the rich or the middle classes. They themselves embrace poverty and work for the poorest of the poor. In other words, only those whose only goal in life is, as Mother Theresa used to say, to 'spread the love of Christ in response to a strong call from God' can follow her example to the fullest. Yet all of us can have a spiritual objective to guide us in life. Detachment and renunciation are qualities we all can practice even to a small extent.

Second, most people of religion use religious prayers, practices and rituals for individual benefit. They think that externally performed words and deeds can be used to practice religion instead of cultivating love in their hearts and minds and serving their fellow beings. They think they can cheat God or that the gods will give them favors. Whatever the religion, I am sad to say in my experience that the majority of both clergy and laymen of today are not truly living up to the teachings of their founders. The general trend today is the acquisition of material things and non-material accolades rather than the renunciation of these. If Buddha was told to evaluate the life work of this Catholic nun, Mother Theresa, He would tell us that she had metta (loving kindness) in her heart, that she converted this

metta into karuna (compassionate action), that she in turn enjoyed muditha (dispassionate joy), and that she was living in upekkha (equanimity) unshaken by name or blame. Therefore, she was a divine being living in human form, because these four attributes of satara brahma viharana (four divine abodes) are the qualities of divine beings. Let us make loving kindness and compassionate action a part of our everyday lives.

Third, Mother Theresa did not approve of conversion from one religion to another. She said that "faith is a gift of God, therefore, nobody can convert anyone." She served mostly among Hindus and Muslims and she used to say she wanted them to practice their religion better. This notorious act of converting people by giving them handouts or favors is a shame and has led to much religious conflict and violence in many countries. We should oppose and do away with this evil practice and help people to practice their respective religion better.

Mother Theresa never shied away from any natural or man-made disaster. She even established a home for the dying poor known as Nirmal Hriday/Pure Heart in 1952. She also established the first hospices for AIDS victims. If she were living today in Sri Lanka, she and her sisters would rush to places where victims of the war are being cared for and looked after. I have been told that there are 400 babies born every month in IDP tents in the Menik Farm, Vavuniya. There is so much we can do for them; this is an opportunity for us to follow her example.

Most of us are victims of a consumer society. We run after wealth like moths after a fire in order to satisfy our insatiable greed for material things. We sell our children, take away human lives, destroy natural forests and pollute all of our life support systems which include the soil, water and air just to earn money. Electronic and print media brings about psychological pollution that negatively affects us and especially our children. I consider this a criminal act. Think of the life of simplicity that Mother Theresa introduced to her sisters of the congregation. When they go about their work wearing white cotton saris with the blue borders and covering their bodies, it is a pleasant and modest sight. Perhaps our ladies can learn a lesson in simplicity

and serenity from that style of dress itself. People who practice a simple and modest mode of livelihood can not only achieve great things for the benefit of the society, but they can also experience the true joy of living.

What I have said so far about the lessons we can learn from Mother Theresa can be summarized as:

- (1) Spiritual motivation
- (2) Total awakening of one's human personality through selfless service
- (3) Practicing non-sectarianism in one's relationships with others
- (4) Accepting social challenges and responding to them positively
- (5) Experiencing the joy of living every moment

There are many more lessons we can learn from her life and mission. She wanted to attain sainthood and she ended up as a saint. We need not aim that high. As she once said "Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies."

In conclusion, I think it is my duty to tell you something about the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka because I am sure that you invited me to deliver this talk because of my association with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka.

For fifty-one years my colleagues and I have tried to cultivate and spread the thought of awakening of all (sarvodaya) through sharing (shramadana). We started with the poorest of the poor communities that were socially and economically depressed. We started sharing our time (dana), and our thoughts and efforts (shrama) with these communities and worked to motivate them to awaken their own self-reliance and community participation to improve levels of livelihood. It was a combination of spiritual values and scientific know-how that started our movement to help people help themselves in the satisfaction of their basic human needs.

This idea and practice caught on and spread far and wide within the country from one village to one hundred villages, then to a thousand villages and now to 15,000 villages and communities inside and outside of Sri Lanka. We spent time on clearly developing our philosophy, principles, programs and structures from the bottom up. We recruited and trained thousands of volunteers and a full-time, paid staff that specialized in various fields all to support the self-help efforts of the people. Also, it became necessary to establish a network of training centers, development education institutes, a Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning, development finance centers and so on. A system of total devolution and decentralization was adopted for effective functioning of this vast people's self-development movement (which may be the largest such organization in Sri Lanka).

I don't propose to make a speech on Sarvodaya now. I will only say that we have embarked on a non-violent total revolution to build a social order where spiritual, moral, and cultural values are imbibed in social, economic and political life of the people. This is done to ensure personality awakening (purna paurushodaya), family awakening (kutumbodaya), rural and urban community awakening (gramodaya), national awakening (deshodaya) and world awakening (vishvodaya). These are very lofty ideals that require one to live a life-long mission of love, sacrifice and service. As Mother Theresa showed us, this mission is worth striving for.

May the spirit of Mother Theresa prevail in all of us. Thank You.

Reference:

Ramon Magasaysay Award Foundation. (2004).

Mother Theresa: Wanting the unwanted, loving the unloved. In Great men and women of Asia: Ramon Magasaysay Awardees 1958-1967 (pp. 13-19). Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil Publishers.

Future is in the Village

Mirai (Future) Village Summit

Tokyo, Japan
Nov. 21st - 23rd, 2009

I am extremely happy that I was invited to this Mirai (future) Village Summit being held in Tokyo and also for being invited to address this summit. At the very beginning of my remarks, I wish to extend my grateful thanks to the Milleniumcity and the Executive Committee of Mirai Village Summit.

I come from Sri Lanka where the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement has just completed fifty years. We have been working with rural communities to reawaken villages to their fullest potential. Today there are 15,000 Sarvodaya village communities in Sri Lanka. This number is a little less than half of the total number of villages in the country. These villages are working together to build new human beings and a new humane society.

When we talk of awakening our village (or even our urban) communities, we have to think of awakening five integrated human groups. These groups are human beings as individual personalities, families, groups of families which we call village or urban communities, national communities or nations, and then lastly the world community/humanity as a whole.

A society must provide a clear vision to communities, families and individuals pertaining to their spiritual, moral and cultural development. If there is no clear vision, then the social, economic and political institutions these societies create and operate will fail to result in good governance, economic prosperity, peace and happiness. Instead, our societies will continue to be plagued with dishonesty, corruption, poverty, violence, conflicts, discrimination, pollution, environmental degradation, climate change and a myriad of other problems.

The world that we are living in today is diseased with all these problems. We are collectively at the brink of losing all the gains we made through millennia of human progress. Unless we act quickly and with foresight, we human beings as a species along with all of our scientific and technological achievements are in danger of disappearing from the surface of this planet. I do not see any hope in any of the mega structures and macro institutions that are trying to tackle this global challenge. All of

these are distant from the people and function as elitist bodies that do not consider seriously traditional wisdom, the innate intelligence of ordinary people or the capability of ordinary people to contribute to a satisfactory approach to the challenge.

The only hope I believe in is an approach founded on our village life. It is true that in most of the so-called rich countries, urbanization has transformed village life without leaving her age-old values, way of life and human relationships. Yet, there are many countries where most of these qualities are still intact because the majority of people in these countries still live in villages.

Sri Lanka is still a country of villages. We in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka are a people's participatory development movement that has been active for over fifty years. From that experience, we have come to the realization that a new world order can be built from the village level upwards. I will now give a brief description of what we have achieved during this period.

Sarvodaya Shramadana means 'to awaken all by sharing one's labor and other resources'. We train village communities how to identify their basic needs, learn necessary skills and launch development programs with their own resources to satisfy these needs. Self-reliance, community participation in decision-making and implementation of these decisions together make these village communities develop self-confidence. This helps awaken each individual's potential and helps communities reach higher and higher levels of livelihood and happiness. Community members become less and less dependent on outside help or government at this satisfaction of basic needs stage. When it later comes to the satisfaction of their secondary and tertiary needs, community members can cite their achievements and seek assistance of local government and the central government.

We start with basic need satisfaction and help villages establish a strong, democratic organizational structure with an elected executive committee. We call this structure a village society

and have it registered as a legal entity. This gives the entity legal authority to start micro finance activities and a variety of economic activities that can improve living standards. While the community progresses in all directions, special emphasis is given at this stage to what we call village self-governance. The number of villages reaching the self-governing stage increases every year. We are getting these villages to elect members to form the next levels, namely, divisional and district levels. These are called deshodaya (national awakening) councils. We visualize a day in the future when all our villages will reach this stage and be able to elect deshodaya representatives throughout the country. Our dream is to make Sri Lanka a commonwealth of self-governing village republics. The best social order we can give the world will have spiritual values, the direct participation of the people in governance and the village as the basic political unit.

Towards a Non-violent Political Economy from the Village Level Up

*International Conference on the topic of 'Towards a Non-
Violent Economy'*

Bhopal, India
Jan. 30th to Feb. 3rd 2010

At the outset, I would like to extend my thanks to Gandhi International, Ekta Parishad and South Asia Peace Alliance for inviting me to this international conference on the theme 'Towards a Non Violent Economy'.

I will introduce what we are doing in Sri Lanka to build a Sarvodaya social order. We have worked extremely hard for over the last fifty years to bring about a transformation of our society into a Sarvodaya social order. We are active in 15,000 villages in Sri Lanka; this is approximately half the number of village communities in the country.

We have developed programs for awakening of human personality (paurushodaya), awakening of families (kutumbodaya), awakening of rural and urban communities (gramodaya and nagarodaya), village self-governance (gramaswarajya) and a program for national awakening (deshodaya). We have also helped groups of people from other countries learn about our Movement and start their own awakening programs in Nepal, Bangladesh, U.S.A, U.K, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany. This attempt to spread that Sarvodaya message internationally is known as a universal awakening (vishvodaya).

We consider Sarvodaya to be the aggregate of the processes realized by all those programs. These processes start with programs that cater to individual human beings and then extend upwards to the universal level. The total impact that is expected of all processes will be an integrated awakening of spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political life at all levels of human society.

I have been asked to speak on basic needs satisfaction of communities for this conference. While I will certainly speak on this subject given to me, I would rather deal with it in a broader context of building a non-violent social, economic and political order based on spiritual, moral and cultural values.

The people of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka realized at the very beginning of their work that it is

much easier to work with poor communities rather than with affluent ones. Well-to-do people always pay lip service to spiritual, moral and cultural values but do not always act as they should when it comes to making sacrifices in order to transform social, political and economic structures. The affluent often hesitate to act responsibly (particularly in the economic sector) when it comes to basic needs satisfaction, justice and fair play that benefit the poor.

On the other hand, communities of poor people can be motivated and inspired to engage themselves in self-reliant, participatory community activities. They can be motivated and inspired to share their labor and meager resources to satisfy one or more of their basic human needs.

Our first approach was to organize shramadana camps where members of the community could be persuaded to share for the common good, whether it be through a donation of labor, knowledge, skills, money or useful material. We succeeded in spreading a shramadana movement across hundreds of village communities and showed villages how with their own effort, they could carry out basic needs satisfaction programs pertaining to the following basic needs sectors:

1. A clean and peaceful environment, both a physical environment and a peaceful psychological environment
2. A clean and adequate supply of water, for drinking and personal use and a sustainable supply of water for home gardens and bigger agricultural irrigation purposes
3. Optimum requirements of clothing for a healthy and simple lifestyle
4. An adequate supply of nutritive and healthy foods that are mainly produced from within the community itself to ensure food security
5. Shelter or modest housing for all the families in the community preferably using the material as well as skills

available within the community itself

6. Health and medical care facilities using indigenous as well as modern preventive and curative methods
7. Use of energy sources available within the community keeping in mind the limitations of non-renewable fossil based resources
8. Communication facilities both with regard to access roads and also as a means of exchanging information using appropriate technologies
9. Promoting a system of total education, which commences from the conception of a child in the mother's womb up to the very end of one's life. In other words, a total education where formal education is only a fraction of total life experiences of a human being throughout life
10. Satisfying spiritual and cultural needs of people by reviving and using all the available traditional resources of culture, knowledge and wisdom

During the first few years of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka, we were able to divide these basic human needs into over 300 sub-needs which people themselves identified in the process of implementation of this program. The word shramadana and its practice spread like wildfire that extended beyond our Movement.

Other civil society organizations and governments accepted this program in the decades that followed. Shramadana created non-monetized capital by way of roads, irrigation tanks, irrigation canals, waterways, re-forestation, houses, wells, sanitary facilities, community centers, schools, multi-purpose centers, etc. This non-monetized capital was created without any formal expenditure of government funds and instead mostly by voluntary donations of cash, material, land, expertise, etc. We know that if we were to calculate the monetary benefit of shramadana, it would amount to

several times that of the government budget for social service programs. Unfortunately, politicians and bureaucrats in the formal political and administrative sector of the society never understood the deep significance of this Movement for national re-awakening, development and the use of human and natural resources for the creation of national wealth. Most individuals in this sector simply could not conceive that a people's participatory development movement could have such a national significance. For them, the only way to find capital was to write project proposals to the IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and bilateral agencies.

A very important contribution of this shramadana activity was the leadership that emerged out of this national wave of constructive work. A qualitative change was brought about in personal relationships as thousands of people worked together shoulder to shoulder. These changes transcended all divisive factors in society, namely, caste, class, race, language, religion and political differences. Similarly, because of a strict code of self-discipline that we maintained in shramadana camps, generations of young people were brought up with important values like sharing, speaking pleasant language, giving up destructive activities and treating everybody with equality. If not for this Movement, the racial conflicts that were created by communal differences and ended in a thirty-year war could have brought about even more damage than what took place. Many authors have written extensively on the benefits of shramadana activities and their results in transforming the consciousness, the economy and the human relationships in this country. These authors include Detlef Kantowsky in *Sarvodaya: the other development*, Joanna Macy in *Dharma and development*, George Bond in *Buddhism in community development* and Sugathadas Gupta in his essay on *Sarvodaya*.

It is our experience that it is extremely difficult to get rural communities into a sustainable development process by sharing their resources and labor alone. In the short term this is possible, but sharing and satisfaction of basic human needs get the rural community to embark on the long but right path towards sustainable development. During the post-colonial

period of this country, most of our poor communities were put in a dependency situation by the government and the NGOs that gave handouts. To combat this, Sarvodaya set up a certain community organizational structure that involved all members of the community. The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement organized village-level Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies and establishes them as incorporated legal entities under a relevant law. This enabled a village society to survey their own resources and potential, do their own planning, buy property, undertake contracts, employ people, start economic activities in agriculture, small industries, handicrafts etc., and learn how to evaluate progress.

All of these activities needed capital. Our banking system is not geared to provide the necessary capital for the poor. Banks are organized to help rich people become richer. This system prevails even though we do not like it. So, poor people have to develop an alternative method from which they can find the required capital. Sarvodaya Economic Enterprise Development Service Program started twenty-five years ago for this purpose. Today, programs involving savings, credit, microenterprise and training in entrepreneurship and vocational skills are in operation in over 5,000 Sarvodaya villages. These programs are opening the way to an alternative economic path. Even though Sarvodaya societies have saved maybe over a billion rupees and have provided credit facilities amounting to several billions, Sarvodaya has yet to get the necessary legal backing from the finance regulating institutions in our country. It is not yet able to provide the capital needed by the poor communities in the generation of income from their own resources. Perhaps we will get the legal sanction very soon from the Central Bank of Sri Lanka in order to develop our economic programs to a level where they and Sarvodaya can have a greater influence on the national economy.

Poverty and powerlessness go hand in hand in the same manner that affluence and power also go hand in hand. Unless we empower the poor politically there is no way that poverty can be substantially confronted. As a movement based on Buddhist and Gandhian values and principles, the Sarvodaya Shramadana

Movement rejects the existing power-oriented party political system. We at Sarvodaya believe that we cannot take the same path to political empowerment like various other political parties and groups do. Our path is not to capture the political and economic power at its center. Instead, we want to convert the pyramidal structure of the present political and economic system to what Mahatma Gandhi called oceanic circles of people's power or a commonwealth of village republics.

The foundation on which we want to build our new economic and political order is already present in the 15,000 Sarvodaya villages. Already, 3,000 of these villages have been identified as suitable for the creation of self-governing villages or grama swarajya. The grama swarajya villages that have already been created have been formed at both divisional and district levels and are made from 300 deshodaya or national awakening councils. These councils will together form what we call the Deshodaya National Assembly. While the present parliament of Sri Lanka has 225 elected members, National Deshodaya Council will have 112,000 members located all over the country. These community leaders will live with and serve the people. In other words, each village community will have three to four Deshodaya National Assembly members. They will assist the existing government institutions as well as civil sector organizations and will have a first-hand knowledge of the UN Charter and other charters pertaining to children's rights, environmental issues, etc.

In addition to Deshodaya networking, Sarvodaya is developing trade and commercial enterprises that link the Sarvodaya villages in a manner that allows flourishing non-exploitative, non-polluted and ecologically sound agricultural and industrial production systems. As I mentioned before, the poor people need empowerment both politically and economically. We can always begin with Shramadana as its justification is from spiritual and social inputs. But, we have to evolve further with new, novel economic and political structures in order to satisfy secondary and tertiary needs.

National Deshodaya Assembly Members can promote non-

violence and protect the environment. They can mobilize people and judicial institutions to take up issues pertaining to the protection of basic human rights, elimination of anti-social practices such as corruption, fraud and violence, and also work to guarantee every citizen fair and equitable treatment under the law. In other words, good governance can prevail in our society at all levels with the Deshodaya program. Maybe the Deshodaya movement can evolve itself in the near future to what we have called a vishvodaya, universal awakening. This movement can awaken the whole of humanity to Gandhi's conceived Sarvodaya social order.

References:

- Bond, G. (2003). Buddhism at Work: community development, social empowerment and the Sarvodaya Movement. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press.
- Gupta, V.S. (2004). Communication development and civil society (pp. 38-39). New Delhi, India: Concept Publishing Company.
- Kantowsky, D. (1980). Sarvodaya: the other development. New Delhi: Vikhas.
- Macy, J. (1985). Dharma and Development: Religion as a resource in the Sarvodaya self-help movement. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press.
- United Nations Department of Public Information. (1945, October 24). Charter of the United Nations. Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/>.

Global Recovery: A Buddhist Perspective

Keynote Speech

United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations (B.E. 2553)

Ayutthaya and Bangkok, Thailand

May 22nd-26th, 2010

I wish to pay my deep respect to the Supreme Sangha Council of Thailand. I would also like to pay my deep respect and admiration to the Royal Thai Government for the blessings they have given, now and on five previous occasions, in holding the 7th United Nations Day Vesak Celebrations in Thailand. I also sincerely thank the organizers, namely, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya from the University of Thailand and Inner Trip Reiyukai International of Japan for inviting me to give a keynote address at this auspicious event on the theme of 'Global Recovery: A Buddhist Perspective'.

We as Buddhists of the world, in my opinion, have a greater responsibility at this time towards the survival of life on this planet than followers of any other faith. In the Teachings of the Buddha, for example, as taught in his kalama sutta, we are not expected to accept anyone or anything as an authority. It is a fundamental practice in Buddhism to inquire into the working of our own mind through investigation and questioning, and resolving problems by appropriate actions in our world. We ourselves are the ultimate authority when it comes to the acceptance or rejection of anything. Therefore, as human beings we have first to find out what has gone wrong in the world before we can look for correctives which we ourselves can implement without beseeching an external authority to intervene. The responsibility of a global recovery is entirely in our hands.

The Buddha placed before us two conceptions of the world namely, 'an external objective world' and 'an internal personal world.' We have to understand the objective world in the context of the universe, which is in a vast cosmic space. The Buddha discouraged cosmic speculations as such speculations have no existential relevance for us. He emphasized the importance of our understanding the 'inner personal world', which is created by us inside ourselves. In Buddha's words 'I do proclaim that in this very fathom-long body, with its perceptions and consciousness, is the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world and the path leading to the cessation of the world'.

As far as the external world is concerned, the Buddha referred in some detail to the vastness of cosmic space and the innumerable number of worlds located therein. These galactic systems are continuously undergoing change both internally and externally. Several discourses (suttas) delivered by the Buddha, especially Agganna Sutta, vividly explained the processes of the origin, the dissolution and the reappearance of the world and life on this planet. He cautioned us not to attempt to go into too detailed a study of these numerous world systems or galaxies as these are endless and cannot be comprehended by the worldly human mind.

However, a basic understanding of the external world is indispensable for our existential purposes as that influences the environment in which we live. We Buddhists believe in three factors that influence our personality as mentioned in the Maha Mangala Sutta. “Pathirupadesa vasoca – pubbeta kacap punnata, ahtrha samma panidica”; these are the environment in which we live, our past karmas and the degree to which we can bring our own minds under control. These are three among the thirty-eight auspicious factors mentioned by the Buddha in this sutta.

Detailed studies of the external universe do not contribute to reduce our suffering in this cycle of births and deaths in which we are caught. Therefore, it is more important to understand and cross this sansaric ocean, the cycle of births and deaths. That is why rather than becoming overly involved in the teaching of external sciences such as astronomy and astrophysics or biochemistry and such other physical sciences, the Buddha concentrated on the subject of helping us to understand the internal science of our own mind. The Buddha discovered the Four Noble Truths and advocated us to follow the Noble Eightfold Path and related moral codes of discipline. However, Buddha’s teachings provide very worthy lessons of human conduct to maintain the health of our planet, which is indispensable for our very existence.

Now the question before us is what has gone wrong in this ‘external world’ which make us suffer more than before and

what are the factors that cause this continuous degeneration and finally what we can do in our 'personal world' to reverse this process. From a Buddhist perspective, global recovery has to begin with oneself. Collectively speaking, we have to begin with ourselves as families, groups, rural villages, urban communities, nations and as the world community and the human family.

When we look for the causal factors that led to the present degeneration in our world we have always to keep in mind that in the same way we are all inter connected and interdependent from the human personality to the global human family, all these causal factors are also interconnected. This is what is taught by the Buddha in the discourse on dependent origination (*paticcasamuppada dhamma*). Therefore when looking for corrective measures we have to pay attention not only to the individual factors but to the totality of the causal factors and devise ways and means to deal with them as a whole.

In daily Buddhist practice we cultivate the thought 'May all sentient beings be well and happy', or in Pali language, '*sabbe satta bhavantu sukkhithaththa*'. So looking at things, life and the world holistically (*sabbe*) is what we are used to as Buddhists.

Today the world is faced with numerous global problems. Some of these problems include poverty, disease, environmental pollution, climate change, violence and crimes, drug addiction, women and child abuse, corruption, wars and terrorism and powerlessness that comes from the violation of human rights. All of these and their causes are interrelated. All these problems can be traced back to lapses in human conduct.

Most people I talk to express the view that poverty is the greatest problem that humanity is faced with. But, very few recognize the relationship that poverty has to other factors like affluent life styles, those few in the world who grab for themselves an unfair quota of the world's resources, the powerlessness of the poor, economic exploitation and the resultant vicious circle consisting of ignorance, illiteracy, disease, divisiveness, violence, drug addiction and so on. Any means used for the eradication of poverty has to take into consideration all these

factors.

As Buddhists, we cannot advocate or apply violent means for removing the causes that bring about poverty. So, non-violent means have to be found and used to combat poverty and the other problems related to it. This implies that the spiritual life of the community has to be uplifted. In all countries there are spiritual traditions that can be regenerated to bring members of the community in a spirit of togetherness, to promote loving kindness and to develop self-reliance. Together, these community members can first discuss and learn the causes that keep them in poverty and then formulate the kinds of actions they can undertake to bring about change. All this starts with the simple practice of anapanasati (mindful breathing) and watching one's own mind.

A highly successful, integrated rural awakening movement in Sri Lanka has been working for the past fifty-two years at the core of poverty eradication. The movement is known as Sarvodaya (to awaken all) and it has a presence in over 15,000 village communities Sri Lanka. The fact that Sarvodaya is based on the Buddhist principles of non-violence has not adversely affected people from non-Buddhist communities such as Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities from joining. The essence of religion is its potential to awaken the spiritual energy in man. Once this energy is released, man-made barriers between religions and communities melt away and transformation of community consciousness occurs.

The Buddhist values (those which are willingly accepted by non-Buddhists in this community organization strategy) can be summarized as follows:

Metta (loving kindness), karuna (compassionate actions), mudhita (dispassionate joy), upekkha (equanimity), dana (sharing), priya vacana (pleasant language), arthacarya (constructive actions) and samanathmatha (equality).

Through these values, the community can begin to accept poverty and its related causal factors as a challenge they can

successfully face and surmount with self-reliance, community participation and a scientific approach. This is how, in a practical way, science can be utilized to influence the environment. Community members can harness their traditional values, skills and technologies, natural and human resources in order to satisfy their basic human needs such as water, food, clothing, shelter, health care, energy, education, communication, spiritual, cultural and environmental needs. Thus, from the grassroots up and in accordance with the Buddhist way, a people's power can constructively and non-violently transform poor communities into successful, developed communities.

From a Buddhist perspective, transformation of the consciousness should also take place in the affluent and powerful sector of the community. The principles enunciated above are equally beneficial to this population in helping them to awaken their human personalities and to bring security and joy of living to their families. The disparities that lead to jealousies, rivalries, class conflicts, violence, terrorism and thefts may be mitigated if the affluent and powerful join the efforts of the community by sharing a part of their excess land holdings with the landless, making material and monetary or professional service donations for educational, health, housing and cultural programs of those in need.

The rich and the privileged can also train young people for gainful employment in the community. Without having maximization of profit as the sole objective, they can start agricultural and small-scale industrial enterprises at the community level to absorb youth and build new economic relationships. They can greatly assist in the creation of a new generation of young entrepreneurs who are respecting of nature, the environment and humanity in general. If this new generation were thus gainfully employed, then the village or urban community can never become a breeding ground for lawless elements, drug traffickers, drug addicts or alcoholics and later on as HIV/AIDS victims.

While charity is good and we should promote charitable deeds, we must not forget that charity cannot be a substitute for

justice. Furthermore, indiscriminate charity breeds beggars. So, people who possess immense wealth and control the global financial economies must undergo a revolutionary change in their consciousness and give leadership for a sustainable global economic transformation that works for the benefit of all. If they fail in their universal duty at this time, as well illustrated by the Buddha in his numerous teachings such as those contained in Chakkawatta Sihanada Sutta, Agganna Sutta and Kutadantha Sutta, they will have to bear the major responsibility for multiplying terrorism, accelerating environmental hazards growing ecological imbalances to uncontrollable global proportions.

It is a well-known fact that national and multinational corporations wield great influence over governments. Therefore, these corporations have a great responsibility, some times greater than governments, for the survival of humans, our planet and all forms of life. Some of the most educated and capable brains on this planet are employed by big corporations. Only a shift in the consciousness of those who control these multinational corporations and governments will lead us to tackling global problems successfully. Is there a way that Buddhism can influence that process?

Transforming the consciousness of those who control the economy may not be that difficult to achieve if we in Buddhist Asian countries like Japan, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Vietnam and Sri Lanka make a singular effort to combat these problems at community level. We can do this by transforming the rural and urban communities in an integrated way. Communities can be made to bear the total responsibility for maintaining law and order, peace, carrying out community development programs and implement a participatory form of self-governance through transforming consciousness, the economy and political power relationships. These countries can be examples to those countries that have a global influence, such as the proprietors of multinational corporations and rich people within our societies. There is no need to confront these individuals in violent ways, verbally or otherwise. After all, every human being is subject to the law of suffering, as Buddha taught us. However rich or

powerful one may be, one cannot escape from physical, mental and emotional suffering. The way to overcome suffering and achieve lasting happiness is to follow the spiritual path shown to us by the Buddha, and one can be taught this no matter of power and wealth.

The Buddha advised His seekers that in order to attain happiness (nibbana) or supreme enlightenment, they should diligently strive to understand the three cardinal laws that we are all subject to, impermanence (anicca), unsatisfactoriness(dukkha) and egolessness (anatta). When people in thousands of rural and urban communities learn this Dhamma and practice the three virtues of morality(sila), concentration (samadhi) and wisdom (pragna), the influence it could have on society could be extraordinary. This creates an enormous spiritual energy that can transform many rich and powerful leaders to follow the path of the Dhamma, the Noble Eight Fold Path.

The last but not the least important problem that concerns us is the increasing organized violence in the world. When democratically elected governments and law abiding citizens are threatened, tortured and killed by terrorist groups, governments are also forced to allocate more of their resources to counteract these violent forces with greater violence. Governments can occasionally succeed in defeating terrorists, as evidence from my country, Sri Lanka, but this happens at great human cost. The roots of terrorism and war cannot be easily destroyed. As the Buddha says, "Hatred does not cease by hatred. It is by non-hatred that it can be removed." It is only by allocation of more and more resources to spiritual moral and cultural development of the people, in addition to improvements in social, economic and political rights, that people can be led to the path of non-violence. Human rights violations, especially of women and children, must be totally stopped if we are to sustain a civilized level of human society.

In recent years, human societies have experienced a great loss of human lives and properties from earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, hurricanes, tornados, eruption of volcanoes and such other natural disasters. Deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS,

cancer and heart disease have similarly brought about large-scale human suffering. There is a general belief in Buddhist societies that when rulers in a society are not righteous, they disobey or violate the *niyama dhammas* (cosmic laws), namely, laws of nature such as those pertaining to *bija* (genes), *utu* (seasons), *kamma* (cause and effect), *chiththa* (mind) and *dhamma* (phenomena). Also, when good governance is lacking, nature revolts and brings destruction to those societies. Are there signs that this revolt on the part of nature is taking global proportions? Should the whole of humanity rally round to save our planet, our nature, our human society and values? The Buddha thought so, and he showed us the way 2,600 years ago.

**A Buddhist Perspective on religious
Co-existence in a Multicultural Society**

*Centre for Islamic Studies Symposium on a Cross-Cultural
Perspective on the Role of Muslims in Emerging Post-war Sri
Lanka*

Miami Hall, Wellawatta, Sri Lanka
August 1st, 2010

I thank the chairman, Mr. Aroos Liywadeen and Ms. Mahiya Abdul Rafeek of the Centre for Islamic Studies for the kind invitation they extended to me in request that I participate and share a few thoughts with you. The thoughts I share with you are from a Buddhist perspective on religious co-existence in a multi-cultural society. These thoughts are situated within the broad context of the theme of today's symposium, the role of Muslims in post-war Sri Lanka; a cross-cultural perspective.

Mr. Chairman, our respected President Council, Mr. Shibly Aziz, chief guest, our most beloved governor Hon. Alavi Moulana, guest of honor Mr. Ridzuan, Anada Sangari, Mr. Feizer Musthapha, Hon. M.P. J.R.P. Suriyapperuma, other distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen.

The Centre for Islamic Studies must be admired for selecting a timely and critically important subject for this symposium. One year has elapsed since the war ended. By now the government and the people in Sri Lanka should have even broadly and generally come to a consensus about the emerging post-war Sri Lanka they would like to see. Honestly speaking, can we say that we have reached some consensus on an agenda we can commonly share and implement? We cannot say so. Hence, the lead you as an organization are giving in this endeavor is admirable.

For me, there are two ways in which I can interpret the 'Buddhist perspective'. One is from the point of view of Buddhists and keeping their interests in mind. That is a sectarian and quantitative point of view I have always rejected in spite of the fact that I have been ridiculed, abused, penalized and even called a traitor to the religion of my birth and race. I have received this abuse by some people who have turned their back to the spiritual content of Buddhism. I always have stood firmly in my belief that a non-sectarian and qualitative perspective based on Buddha Dhamma, or the teachings of the Buddha, should always guide us at all times in all our relationships, whether they be personal or social. From the little I know about the teachings of Islam, Christianity and Hinduism, I think this same perspective of being guided by your supreme spiritual

source has been common thread and extremely relevant.

Muslims are not strangers to me as the village of my birth (Unawatuna) on the southern coast of Sri Lanka, as well as neighboring villages, had a large proportion of Muslims. We grew up together and attended the same school and there were never animosities between us. At our temple, Dayaka Sabha, there were always Muslim leaders present who were a part and parcel of our own Buddhist community. Even later in life through my higher education, my social work career and to this very leadership role I have now in the Sarvodaya Movement, I have associated myself very closely with many Muslims. They also have played a leadership role in the Sarvodaya Movement and our Movement is very active in many Muslim villages in all parts of the country.

Even though Muslims are not the majority or the main minority ethnic group, their importance has been well documented by historians. If we consider Sri Lanka as a whole, historically, culturally and population-wise, the importance of the Muslim community has been great. I have no doubt that the Muslim community will have to play a critical role in rebuilding and fusing our communities into a united and peaceful nation.

We have emerged from three decades of violence and killing. Terrorism has been defeated in our country, thanks to all those who sacrificed their lives as well as those who contributed in different ways to the effort. But, we cannot say that the causes that led to disunity, communal conflicts and terrorism have been defeated. They are very much present in our post-war society of today. It is the duty of all responsible citizens and communities in this emerging post-war Sri Lanka to make a positive contribution to removing the causes that started the conflict. In my opinion, the Muslim community is placed in a very advantageous and quite unique position to contribute to the building of sustainable peace and happiness in our country.

Despite the fact that we are Muslims, Hindus, Christians or Buddhists, we have to look at our religions and religious communities in a qualitative way and not in a quantitative

and numerical way. We need to avoid falling into the sectarian trap, which invariably will sow the seeds of distrust, unhealthy competition and ill will. This will eventually result in social disturbances, conflict, and perhaps even bloodshed. In other words, we have to capture the spiritual essence of our religions in our hearts and open our hearts to the universe. This will inculcate in our personalities the truth that we are all one human family.

The happiness and well-being of every individual, family, group, community, nation or world community is contained in the concept and practice of working for the good of all. The word 'sarvodaya' connotes that meaning, or what we normally call the awakening of all. Without this concept and the practices following it, there can never be sustainable peace and happiness in our communities or in the world. How can we make people realize that in uplifting material standards of only those who they call their own people (based on cast, race, religion, class, political party or even nationality) is counter-productive in the long run in multi-religious, multi-ethnic or plural communities?

If the goal of well-being or awakening of all is well ingrained in our minds, we can all enjoy justice and fair play in equal measure, both in the so-called majority community and also in the minority communities. There will be no discrimination or favoritism. Instead, there will be justice, equity and fair play for all. Let me give an illustration. Assume that the government or any other organization decides to solve the problem of shelter for 100 families. Assume that 73% are Sinhala, 17% are Tamil and 10% are Muslim and others. If we build houses for all in need, irrespective of ethnicity, then every community receives equal benefit. The problem is that in a society divided by all kinds of man-made barriers, including divisive party politics that always promote basic instincts of man (greed, ill will, ignorance), it is extremely difficult to make human beings understand this concept of well-being for all. But, if we work with determination, it is possible to bring the realization of well-being for all into the minds of people. This can motivate people to follow a constructive and sustainable path for social, economic and political development.

During the short time I have at my disposal, I would like to place before you three goals that we may collectively try to achieve in post-war Sri Lanka. These goals are primarily based on the concept of well-being for all, to which I have referred to earlier in this speech. In this collective effort, Muslims in Sri Lanka have the unique ability to contribute by closing the communication gap between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Most Muslims are conversant in Sinhala as well as Tamil languages; this makes the Muslim community an excellent bridge. As Muslims are present in all districts of Sri Lanka in significant numbers, the contribution the Muslims can make to unify our people and build a unified nation is greater than that of any other religious or ethnic community in Sri Lanka.

The first goal is to use every resource we have to build unity and transform our nation into a truly Sri Lankan identity, and we can do this while promoting our rich ethnic and cultural diversity. This cannot be done by legislation or military interventions. Instead, it can be done by a transformation of the consciousness of people. Interfaith dialogues, interfaith peace walks, interfaith mass peace meditations and interfaith Shanthi Sena peace camps for youth are some of the activities that the Sarvodaya Movement has employed and organized since 1983 and can continue to employ in order to transform the consciousness of people in a direction of unity in diversity. If authorities resort to wrong methods, such as forcing certain ethnic groups to register themselves in the police stations close to their residences, then our efforts will be less successful. In the same way that we can bring justice to all through a non-sectarian approach, law and order will better prevail in a society if a non-discriminatory, democratic approach can be made by the authorities.

The second goal is as follows. I am familiar with the exodus of the Muslims in Jaffna and Northern Province that occurred in 1990. An estimated 75,000 people were ordered by the LTTE to leave the city within two hours and leave the province within forty-eight hours. I remember the massive relief operation we in Sarvodaya launched in the Puttalam district to help these refugees. The LTTE evicted Sinhala and even some Tamil people.

We did our very best to help these individuals. Then, we have the question of Tamil refugees who lost their homes during the last phase of the war and even ex-combatants and soldiers who suffered. I think we should join hands with the government authorities to look at all of these people as a whole and initiate rehabilitation, resettlement and community reawakening processes for the benefit of all. This is the kind of spirit I am trying to emphasize in this talk. The government should certainly play the lead role in this but the government alone cannot achieve success in this task. Community participation in all aspects of planning implementation and evaluation of this program is a must for success.

The third goal is as follows. Last week, a ceremony was held at Sarvodaya headquarters to recognize Dr. Jayantha Dhanapala. This gentleman is the well-known Sri Lanka diplomat who headed the UN Disarmament Commission and he is also the winner of the Sarvodaya National Award for 2009. He reminded us of a very important issue to which we have not yet paid sufficient attention. He quoted from a speech made by former Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. The quotation is as follows, "...people will not enjoy security without development, or development without security. Similarly, we can never realize development without security. But I also stress that we will not enjoy either without universal respect for human rights." He emphasized the importance of both national security to protect the sovereignty and national boundaries of the country as well as the security of citizens in ensuring their human rights. Even for our nation, he referred to the military expenditure statistics in comparison to the expenditures for combating hunger, malnutrition, ill health, shelter and education. He said that in 2009, all nations spent 1,531 billion U.S. dollars toward weapons and only spent 40 to 50 billion toward realizing the Millennium Development goals.

A gun culture was introduced during our civil conflict here. I have been told that civilians in Sri Lanka illegally possess about 1.9 million small arms. Even sophisticated weapons can be purchased from the underworld. Sri Lanka is earning a name as an illegal arms smuggling center. Armed gangs have become

so powerful that according to recent news reports, these gangs interfered with a murder case and threatened the jury until the jury resigned. If this situation continues, not just the judiciary, but the government as a whole will not be able to function and enforce the rule of law. As proposed by Dr. Jayantha Dhanapala, the Sarvodaya Movement decided to launch an 'aviyata thitha' (halt to weapons) campaign to demand that no civilians (except under only very exceptional circumstances) be allowed to possess weapons. The law on civilian possession of arms, which was imposed in 1916 by the British, should be drastically amended. We are launching this 'Aviyata Thitha Campaign' on the 21st of August from a Sarvodaya village in the Colombo district called Pore. There are 1,000 delegates from all the twenty-five districts who are attending the fifth Deshodaya conference and they will discuss this campaign. I request that all of you join this campaign because this is needed in the reconstruction of post-war Sri Lanka.

I proposed three activities that you can join with others to undertake and rebuild Sri Lanka after the war. Together, we need to build a Sri Lankan identity, immediately take action to rebuild the lives of all who suffered from the war and join hands with the government and all others. To achieve these three objectives, we need to employ an integrated and broad national approach pertaining to the transformation of our consciousness. Likewise, an alternative approach to economic development and an alternative to centralized party and power politics need to be employed. This necessary, people-centered participatory democracy can be called community self-governance. The achievement of these objectives is an integrated framework that we can use to create a sustainable and peaceful society that works for all.

Reference:

Annan, K. (2005, April). Secretary-General's address to the Commission on Human Rights. Speech presented at the United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

Education for Sustainable Development

*Global Citizens' Conference Celebrating the UN Decade of
Education for Sustainable Development*

Tokyo, Japan
September 11th and 12th, 2010

I am thankful to Prof. Osamu Abe, Chairman, of the Global Citizens' Conference, Prof. Ryokichi Hirano, Director of DESD (UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development) World Festival Forum and the organizing committee on DESD for inviting me to participate in this conference. I was invited to contribute some thoughts in order to broaden and deepen approaches to education for sustainable development in Asia. My colleagues and I have been experimenting with this topic for over five decades under the auspices of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka. I accepted your invitation and I hope to accede to your request and also learn more from your deliberations.

I am very impressed by the leadership that has been given by the Japanese on this subject as leadership has been given through the government, universities, other higher educational institutions, NGOs and the private sector. You have successfully networked with many international institutions including the UN itself to give this issue the global importance that it truly deserves. Your desire to learn about the views and experiences of people's organizations like Sarvodaya is highly commendable, especially considering that you are in the midst of very successful work already.

There is a vast difference between the way you started your program and the way we initiated and developed ours. You had the backing from the government financially and in other ways. You started your program through higher educational institutions that contain a very high quotient of research scholars and professional inputs. We had neither of these advantages because we were small poor marginalized communities that were spread all over the country. These communities belonged to a national voluntary movement called Sarvodaya (to awaken all). The Sarvodaya Movement encouraged people to learn from their rich Buddhist philosophy and cultural heritage, to depend on their self-reliance and community participation, and to harness their physical and human resources to fulfill their basic human needs. The pioneers of the Movement were teachers and students who ventured voluntarily into poor rural communities to physically donate their labor, knowledge and

other resources for the benefit of all. These pioneers worked shoulder to shoulder with the community; this gave community members human dignity and recognition along with material gain in drinking water wells, irrigation canals, or community facilities like preschool buildings.

In fact, the Sarvodaya Movement gave meaning to community issues pertaining to education, sustainability and development long before the government and other higher educational, professional and administrative bodies took up these issues. Sarvodaya was able to find definitions, techniques, methodologies and justifications for the work it was doing with teachers, students and villagers in socially depressed communities in Sri Lanka. Sarvodaya was able to do this without confining itself to textbook-based, examination-oriented classroom teaching and learning.

Very few realized that the Sarvodaya Movement was much more than a haphazard community service effort. Most armchair critics called it a 'do-gooding attempt' that did not extend to the root causes of poverty. But, the core leaders of the Movement were clear in their minds and they knew that they were on the path to a great discovery by finding answers to important questions that include the following. How can you link the formal schooling system with the community? What are the most appropriate development goals for Sri Lanka? How can the people participate in deciding and implementing development policies along with governmental agencies? How can traditional technologies be combined discriminately with modern appropriate technologies? How can our ancient spiritual, moral and cultural values be harmonized with modern scientific social, economic and political systems? How can we transform the consciousness, the economy and the political system of the country for a new social awakening? Our findings, experiences and achievements have generated immense benefit in the country and have been well documented by the government. Many of our programs and ideas have been adopted as official government policy.

As the Movement expanded over a period of fifty years (to

involve over 15,000 village communities), the attention of the Movement extended to the satisfaction of people's secondary and tertiary needs in addition to basic needs. I hope I am not wrong when I say that you started your effort from the top while our effort was from the bottom-up. Your country had already attained a very high technological and material advancement while ours is a country still struggling to fulfill basic needs. We first organized communities for self-help and identified ten basic human needs to be addressed. The ten basic needs pertained to the environment, water, clothing, food, housing, health, communication, energy, culture and spiritual development. So, at the start of our interpretation, definition and application of the concepts of education, sustainability and development, we realized that they were directly related to the satisfaction of the above basic needs and the improvement of the overall quality of life in the village communities. Surely these two approaches, top-down and bottom-up, must meet at some point to deliver benefit to the world. I am sure there are many things we can learn from each other as we work for the common benefit of human wellbeing, the health and sustenance of our environment and ecological equilibrium.

We had to start at the grassroots level to discover from our own Buddhist cultural heritage the meanings we would give to expressions like education, sustainability and development. We were more concerned with what the common people's understanding would be. We were especially concerned with the rural people's understandings as these were they people who would use these expressions in their day-to-day work to earn their livelihood, satisfy their basic human needs and lead contented and peaceful lives. The meanings we gave to these words and expressions could not be abstract. Instead, they had to be down-to-earth pragmatic thoughts that had much cultural relevance. For example, every member of the village community memorized childhood teachings. One example is the following expressed by a Pali stanza from Buddha's teachings:

Arogya parama labha

Supreme gain is good health

Santutti paraman dhanan

Supreme wealth is contentment

Visvasa parama gnati

Supreme relative is trust

Nibbanan paraman sukan

*Supreme happiness is enlightenment or
liberation from the cycle of births and deaths*

The thoughts and practices that are integrated into the villager's lives need to be evaluated by the villagers themselves and need to align with their already treasured thoughts, practices, values and aspirations. I will elaborate on these four ideas. First, people evaluate whatever they use for their day-to-day living (food, clothing, shelter, energy requirements, etc.) from good health point of view. Second, they give a greater value and importance to satisfaction of their basic needs over satisfaction of endless wants that promoted by greed-inducing commercial advertisements. Third, people treasure trust they have towards one another in the community instead of feeling that they are forcibly bound to one another by legal requirements. Forth, above all the worldly needs and enjoyment in life, people give highest importance to the very essence of human life according to Buddhist Teachings, namely, attaining supreme enlightenment or Nirvana. This can only be realized by abstaining from evil, cultivating good, and purifying of the mind from all defilements.

Our religious teachings emphasize the avoidance of wrong livelihood and also the proper use of wealth. The Buddha once said to a lay disciple named Anathapindika:

There are, householder, four kinds of happiness, which may be achieved by a lay person who enjoys sensual pleasures, depending on time and occasion. What are these four? The happiness of possession, the happiness of enjoyment, the happiness of freedom from debt, and the happiness of blamelessness.

It is a real challenge how one can reconcile the above principles with the day-to-day existence in a consumer society today. Education has to be related to life and culture. It has to be broad-based, all embracing and transcending of time and space. From the time of conception in a mother's womb, through infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle age, old age and up to the moment of death (including the process of dying), all that is experienced through the five senses and the mind itself can be expressed as a learning process. Education is the informal, non-formal or the formal way a society intervenes and organizes itself for the common good.

The intervention of an informal, non-formal or formal educational system in the personality of a human being, a group of people or a community in general is dependent on many factors. Three of the most important factors for the individual are the environment in which one lives, the genetically inherited abilities and the degree to which one is capable of bringing one's mind under control. Similarly, several factors have to be taken into consideration when we design educational programs for the community as a whole. These factors include the geographical and ecological situation, the demographic features, the values customs and conventions, the cultural history, the traditional technological resources, the languages and the aims and objectives of the changes aspired for by the community.

We had to design educational curricula and training modules for two kinds of stakeholders. The first group was high school students who participated as volunteers in Sarvodaya community development programs during their weekends and vacations. The second group was all the members (including all age groups) of the community at large. We initially imparted this training in village shramadana (gift of labor) camps. Later as the Movement expanded, we expanded on shramadana camps and formalized development education institutes and centers in all districts of Sri Lanka. These education institutes and the centers are now connected to a new apex body called the Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning. The clientele has also extended much beyond the members of the communities and

high school students with whom we initially worked. Though we have no formal recognition so far as an officially recognized development educational institution, but because of the variety of community development activities we are engaged in and the national coverage we have as a people's movement, we have been able to work with many central, provincial and local government institutions, local and foreign universities, UN bodies and even international financial institutions like the World Bank.

When considering the idea of education, our attention goes to the concepts of sustainability and development. These concepts of sustainability and development relate to day-to-day life and living and are therefore easily understood by common people. Before international markets, industry and modern communication systems completely bypassed old patterns of living, the common people took great care of their health, they were content when they satisfied their basic human needs, they were able to build a cohesive community organization based on trust and they sought supreme or eternal happiness through attaining the highest enlightenment, nibbana. These were the four goals mentioned in the above quoted verse in Pali language.

Both sustainability and development are not static concepts. They are both dynamic ever-changing concepts. The extent to which the human mind can comprehend these concepts will correlate with the positive or negative impact these concepts will have on our resources, our livelihoods, our environment and social peace. The difficult part is inculcating these concepts in our consciousness and assimilating these concepts with the language we use and our entire behavioral system.

The central philosophy of Buddhism teaches us three conditions to which we (and whatever is ours) are subject to. These conditions are impermanence, suffering and egolessness. By a code of right conduct in thought, word and deed, we can cultivate high morality, mental concentration and supreme wisdom that will lead us to the highest unconditioned happiness. The understanding and practice of this dhamma (teaching) is intended to promote welfare and directly visible happiness in

this present life, welfare and happiness pertaining to the next life and the ultimate good or supreme goal of nibbana, which is the final release from the cycle of rebirths.

The writings on education and sustainability that have I seen do not contain the scope and practice I have described, nor do they explore the depth and breadth that I have expressed. When we try to explain and understand sustainability and development in the context of rural people in Sri Lanka, whether they are Buddhists or Hindus, we always keep in mind their belief in rebirth (kamma) and action and fruits of that action (kamma vipaka) and what they consider to be meritorious deeds (pin) and sinful deeds (pav). Therefore, in agriculture, industry, trade and commerce, labor relations, and environmental and human rights, religious and cultural considerations always play an important role when it comes to earning a right livelihood. For that reason, we reject normal measures of development from a western materialistic point of view such as GNP, GDP, growth rates, per-capita income, etc. This means that any economic activity that involves killing, destroying our forests, depleting our natural resources, destroying our life support systems, polluting the environment, degrading our human self-respect, exploiting human labor, using child labor, producing and selling armaments and drugs, etc., are rejected as they are not right approaches to sustainable development. We believe that these approaches to development are in opposition to cultural and religious values in Sri Lanka and that these approaches should not receive any state patronage.

We define sustainable development as a total awakening process of human personalities, family personalities, community personalities, national community personalities and the world community personality. This awakening occurs through six integrated sectors, namely, spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political sectors. We believe that only an approach of this nature will lead our world into a lasting state of peace and happiness. Formal education starting at the level of pre-school and extending to higher and post-graduate education should amount to the sum total of all interventions in this universal awakening process.

If we are to draw from the above-mentioned six sectors of knowledge and cover each of the personalities defined above, we should have experts in specialized fields prepare syllabi, curricula, theoretical modules, practical field projects, and research exercises that are relevant to the problem areas in each country. The Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning is humbly preparing the above material with the help of voluntary scholars and a few full-time staff members. Our institute also implements quite a number of field projects with the cooperation of several Sri Lankan universities.

So far, the Sarvodaya attempts in education and sustainable development have been mostly with rural communities and rural high school students. Only recently have we started to reach out to university and higher education institutions. Most development activities in Sri Lanka are politicized or bureaucratized and we in Sarvodaya suffer from a lack of political recognition in the system. For these reasons, we have not yet been able to address education and sustainable development to the greatest of our potential due to our lack of formal legal enforcement, lack of financial means, lack of other physical resources and lack of a paid professional staff for managerial and research work.

It is extremely difficult for voluntary bodies to function without government support. However, so far we have been able to survive with integrity. The number of national and international NGOs with foreign funding mushroomed in our country in 1970. Some of these organizations failed in accountability and some others got entangled with power politics, thus bringing down the esteem and dignity that Sarvodaya maintained for decades. Most of these defacing NGOs have by now disappeared from the national scene.

Our present government has a clear policy on education for sustainable development. It has a good grasp of the importance of environmental and ecological sustainability, and above all, a commitment to revive and uphold traditional Buddhist values and practices. The government even has a separate

Ministry for Environmental Affairs. All seventeen universities in Sri Lanka have started departments dedicated to the study, research and teaching of the topic of sustainable development and all primary and secondary schools have an environmental study component. The national focus on terrorism is now part of history. Sarvodaya is looking forward to contributing and cooperating more than ever before with the government, intergovernmental bodies and all others mentioned above to promote a new focus on education, sustainability and development in Sri Lanka.

Higher Education and Sustainable Development

*Sophia University Discussion on Higher Education and
Sustainable Development*

Tokyo, Japan
September 11th, 2010

The whole world has come to the realization that in our mad rush to achieve increased materialist prosperity, we have reached a point where we have to pause and rethink whether we should continue on the same path. Hardly anybody disagrees with the fact that the kind of development we have pursued up to this point in history is no longer sustainable. On the contrary, if we do not find an alternative path we may well end up with a planet where not only we humans, but also the entire living world, will not survive.

To correct this situation and find a new path, higher educational institutions have to play the leading role. They are the custodians of universal knowledge, and they have to transform that knowledge into wisdom in order to help the human being and the society sustain a balanced livelihood and a livable planet where all can live in peace and happiness.

Sustainability is not only applicable in the economic field. It is equally or more applicable to non-economic sectors such as spiritual, moral and cultural aspects of human life on which a sustainable social, political and economic system can prevail for a long time. In Sri Lanka from the 3rd century B.C. (the time Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka) to the 11th century A.D. (that is until the ancient Anuradhapura kingdom was disrupted by South Indian invasions), such a sustainable system prevailed in keeping people economically prosperous, content and peaceful.

It is my contention that as long as countries continue to base their progress exclusively on economic indicators without taking into consideration the quality of human personalities and the ultimate goal of human life for which all these developments are targeted, there can never be sustainability even in the material sense. For that reason, our higher educational systems should have a large component of learning and practical exercises directed at personality awakening of the student.

As Japan is also a predominantly Buddhist country like the country of Sri Lanka from which I come, I would like to give a few examples of the Sarvodaya's Buddhist approach to personality

awakening. Every human being has the potential to develop himself or herself to the level of a Buddha – a fully enlightened human being devoid of all defilements. According to Buddhist teachings, this is the highest level to which any human being can aspire to. This spiritual goal should be inculcated into the mind and consciousness of all human beings right from the conception of a human being in a mother's womb, and then throughout infancy, childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood and old age until death. This is the educational intervention needed to guide the life-long learning process that is taking place within us continuously with or without any external intervention. Until and unless our educationists, planners and decision makers understand and make appropriate changes to policy, the design and implementation of educational programs, the sustainable development we are talking about, will merely fade away into a dream.

Through its experience in development and education, the Sarvodaya Movement of Sri Lanka has improvised a large number of learning programs for all age groups (including expectant mothers) specifically aimed to awaken the spiritual potential of each individual. Guided meditation is a very important technique we use because it is appropriate to different age groups and even suits each individual's needs.

When spirituality in a society collapses, it invariably is followed by a moral decay and cultural degeneration. This is the underlying cause of poverty, greed, corruption, increased criminalization of societies, drug addiction, and violence. Furthermore, the entire range of factors that leads to the breakdown of sustainability in every sector is connected directly or indirectly to the global collapse of spiritual, moral and cultural collapse of human society in general.

Take for example the global economic collapse. Of course those nations who were responsible for this situation have temporarily met the challenge by taking artificial short-term survival steps. They ensured their survival by leaving the creation of a sustainable solution to the coming generations. The collapse of financial markets was caused by unquenchable greed and large-

scale corruption. Similarly, ecological collapse, water and food crises, health failure, energy crisis, interethnic conflicts, political chaos, climate changes and trivialization of mass media can all be attributed to the global spiritual degeneration that has been brought about.

We have to turn a full circle. Who should give leadership and show the way to a recovery? It is my belief that higher educational institutions should take up this challenge. Piecemeal solutions will not be of much use. Managing crisis situations will not result in removing the causes that brought about that situation. A clear understanding of the problem, finding out the cause, following a vision that will lead to the removal of the cause and the creation of a path that we have to follow for a complete solution is the four-fold methodology higher educational institutions need to follow.

This methodology can be applied to all global problems confronting unsustainable development. Let me enumerate a few problem areas that can be studied using this method. This methodology was shown to us by none other than the Buddha himself 2,599 years ago when he declared to the world the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path as the only way to overcome all suffering in our endless cycle of births and deaths and to attain enlightenment.

Some problem areas to research using this methodology include:

1. Food pollution and shortage crisis
2. Water pollution and shortage crisis
3. Environmental degradation crisis
4. Ecological collapse crisis
5. Over-urbanization crisis
6. Collapse of financial markets crisis
7. Political and poor-governance crisis
8. Nuclear armaments and small arms crisis
9. Increasing criminalization, drug use, mental disorders, suicides crisis (particularly in youth)
10. Inadequate presence of spiritual and moral theory and

practice in the higher educational systems crisis (in relationship with all the above crises)

With the meager resources at our disposal for research, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka is following the above methodology to deal with the crisis situations we face in Sri Lanka in a very small way. Below are a few points that I'd like to emphasize and give importance to in our approach.

1. Long-term vision setting
2. Trans-religious spiritual perspectives
3. Mindfulness and altruistic Joy
4. Reversal in urbanization
5. More people in agriculture and local food self sufficiency
6. Spread of sustainable living economies
7. Increasing local crafts and producing to satisfy local needs
8. Community participation in all decision-making processes.
9. Consensual governance through self-governing village communities
10. Local energy self-sufficiency

We are trying to get this self-sustaining development education and implementation program going in nearly 15,000 villages where the Sarvodaya Movement is active. As we are a voluntary people's development movement without funding from the government or any other regular source, most of our work is done with donations of labor, skills, material, land, expertise and even money. For those reasons, governmental or non-governmental or private sector organizations, which have their own funding sources, can take our example, extend on it, and do much more in the field of higher education for sustainable development.

The Leadership Figure that Future Asian Society Needs

Keynote Address

*21st Asian International Network Seminar
Sponsored by Japan Asian Association and
Asian Friendship Society*

Osaka, Japan
October 9th, 2010

I wish to thank my dear friend (a benefactor and a unique Asian civil society leader) Rev. Kimihiko Murakami, the Executive Director of Japan Asian Association and Asian Friendship Society (JAFS) and his colleagues for inviting me to give the inaugural keynote address at this International Network Seminar. As I have been associated with JAFS for a long time, and as Rev. Murakami was a great supporter of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka, I take this as an opportunity to show my gratitude and express my solidarity. At the same time, coming to this ancient and beautiful city of Osaka is like coming home, as I have enjoyed her hospitality many times in the past few years.

This is the 21st Asian International Network Seminar that you have organized. Sustaining this event for over two decades in itself is a great achievement. We in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka had the good fortune of hosting the 13th Seminar in 2002 November at our Headquarters in Moratuwa to share knowledge and wisdom that not only benefits the Asian people, but also the whole of humanity. The whole of humanity is looking forward to a society where poverty, hunger, conflicts, violation of human rights, environmental and ecological collapse, climate change, crimes, injustices and armed conflicts will no longer be the order of the day. Our work to build this future society is a great contribution we are giving to our civilization.

Throughout the course of the past seminars, we discussed and dealt with most of the problems that we are faced with, as relevant to the Asian region. At this seminar, the theme that has been selected for discussion is 'the leadership figure that future Asian societies need'.

The problems that humanity is facing today cannot be limited to particular countries or regions. They are all interrelated and global in nature. Think of the leaders we have had in Asia at the peak of our Asian civilizations such as Gautama the Buddha, Confucius, and Jesus Christ. They were born in the Asian region but evolved themselves into global leaders. Their teachings and their messages were for the whole world and the entirety

of humanity. In our literature, the Buddha is referred to as a teacher for all the three worlds – the world of humans, the world of devas (gods) and the world of brahmas (the highest evolved divine beings). He is said to have delivered his dhamma sermons in all these three worlds for the good of humans, devas and brahmas.

During the times when the above spiritual leaders lived, there were also other kinds of leaders who ruled over people as kings, emperors, generals and so on. Very few of the latter are remembered with love and respect by the generations that followed. However, emperor Asoka of India was one such ruler whose system of governance is still considered one of the best forms of governance that the world has experienced.

Therefore, with so many global problems and crises, which may have a negative end result in our planet, we need universal and national leaders who will be teachers of the people. While they lead Asia, they can also blaze a path for the whole world and lead us towards sustainability and peace. The community of nations is so interdependent and interlinked in every respect that even leaders of small village or urban communities have to possess a highly developed consciousness that is capable of absorbing universal truths.

In the speech I have been asked to deliver, I will first make some comments about the choices we have to make with regard to national level leaders, particularly political leaders. Second, I will make some observations about non-political national leaders we need for Asia. Third, I will express some of my thoughts on community leaders we need for rural and urban communities. Last, I will make some general comments on leadership that is relevant to the youth.

I have no faith in the Machiavellian-type leaders. They get to power using any means at their command and thrive in powerful positions by creating fear in the minds of people. They believe in using violence as a tool for governance. They do not believe that a society based on “nonkilling or nonthreat to kill” (an expression created by Prof. Glen Paige of Hawaii)

can be established. They maintain heavy securities around them, directly or indirectly control media, build up huge armed forces in the pretext of defending national sovereignty, treat the rule of law with contempt, do not respect human rights, create an underworld that they control under their patronage to deal with opponents, enrich themselves, their kith and kin and their cohorts with public funds, and buy over intellectuals, business leaders and even members of religious hierarchies. These leaders leave the impression in the minds of people that their leadership vision is based on the false views that they can enjoy power permanently (nicca), can satisfy their five senses eternally (sukha) and can continue to cultivate their egocentricity (athma). They seem to have forgotten the truth that all of us are subject to old age, decay, suffering and death. They have turned their backs to higher goals and values in human life.

My concept of a leader is quite the opposite of those with the above qualities. He or she should be a human being with a large compassionate heart. Leadership is not for self-glorification, but for the extension of compassion and loving. Right leaders never resort to wrong means to get into seats of power. Right leaders want to serve the people and leave a world in a better state than the world they inherited at their birth. They will lead a simple, truthful and transparent life and set an example to their followers. These leaders are conscious of the impermanent (anichcha), unsatisfactory (dukkha) and non-egoistic (anathma) nature of human life, and therefore, will not resort to Machiavellian types of evil techniques and deeds. These evil techniques and deeds only lead to poor governance, which results in great suffering to people.

For the sustainability of a peaceful and prosperous society, there should be a balance in national leadership in different disciplines. Spiritual leadership surpasses all other forms of leadership for it provides a vision to all, irrespective of vocation, to reach a happy and contented level of living. It is this vision that provides moral character and cultural norms to one's style of living.

While the spiritual leaders influence the human mind and civilizations for millennia, in the short term, it is the political leadership of a nation that innately matters. Political leadership of a nation decides the life and death of its citizens or the rise and fall of civilizations. During the golden era of the Sri Lankan history, (from 6th century B.C. to 13th century A.D.) kings and political leaders who ruled over people were advised to follow the ten Buddhist principles of good governance, namely, beneficence, morality, recognition and promotion of talent and skills, uprightness, impartiality, composure, non-hatred, nonviolence, patience, and non-revengefulness. Even for modern political leaders, these principles are essential to follow if the leaders believe in democracy, righteousness and humanitarianism.

Intellectual leadership that is provided by erudite teachers at higher educational institutions is a major influential factor in the entire spectrum of national society and the thinking of all people. Every aspect of life and living is affected by the knowledge disbursed by the higher educational institutions. This knowledge may come down from the highest to the lowest levels of society. This knowledge-base can be used slowly and progressively to cultivate right wisdom in communities, that in turn will inculcate values such as truth, non-violence, beneficence, justice, respect for all life and care for children and elders in the lives of the people.

Professionals in science and technology are providing scientific leadership and are guiding the nation towards appropriate application of their theories and practices to ensure ecological and environmental stability. This kind of leadership is very critical in building sustainable societies. Furthermore, a wrong application of science and technology exclusively directed to materialistic development can cause irreparable damage and destruction to rich cultural heritages.

Social development leadership is a very important subject that generally is ignored by development planners and bureaucrats. Lifelong education, general health, legal literacy, conflict resolution and peace, prevention of alcoholism and drug

addiction, interfaith cooperation and dialogue, interracial harmony, community organization, leadership training and vocational guidance are some of the areas that fall under social development. We should be able to educate and train leaders in these sectors at the village level and also at the national level. We should be able to educate and train leaders in these sectors and encourage and assist them in starting relevant projects and programs.

Leadership in public or government service is very important in modern societies. In the past, government servants or civil servants were recruited on strictly educational and other qualifications and then trained and placed in suitable positions. They earned their promotions on merit and the system functioned very efficiently. No political interference was possible in the discharge of their duties. In most countries, this situation has changed and like most other services, public service also is politicized. This is a great pity. We must try to revert back to the old, impartial system of civil service.

Corporate leadership today is very strong and influential in almost all of our countries. Unabated corporations and businesses are becoming stronger and stronger with globalization. There are more negative consequences than positive ones when we consider the deterioration of environmental situations, ecological disasters, cultural degradation and economic impacts on the poor majority of people in the world. The failure of markets, institutions and morality led the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Koffee Anan, to compile and issue a directive now known as the 'UN Global Compact for Corporations'. This directive has ten principles for corporations to follow. Following this directive, the 'Manifesto Global Economic Ethic' was issued. This manifesto discussed the consequences and challenges for global businesses and was authored by three individuals, namely, Hans Kung, Klaus M. Leisinger and Josef Wieland. We, as the members of the global community, should keep abreast of these developments and play our part to get these measures implemented.

Last but not the least, an independent judiciary is necessary as

the last resort for citizens to seek justice. Upright and fearless jurors and judges who uphold the rule of law are indispensable leaders for a just society. Unfortunately, we hear of instances in some of our countries where some unscrupulous people in power corrupt even the rule of law.

In summary, our nations should have spiritual, intellectual, political, educational, scientific, social, business and judicial leaders working hand-in-hand with one another to build a healthy and peaceful society.

So far, I have not commented on the global and national level leaders that we need in Asia. Even though we have a few cosmopolitan, highly urbanized urban areas, we cannot hide the fact that most of Asia today is rural. These rural or village communities, as well as small towns and cities, need leaders who can comprehend the changes taking place in terms of modernization and industrialization.

We cannot think of rural or urban community leaders without having a vision of the future community organization in Asian countries. In spite of the modernization and industrialization, which has taken place in certain pockets of Asian countries, I am of the opinion that a good future for Asian countries is dependent upon the extent to which we can envision an alternative development strategy where community organization plays a central role. This is different from the present trend where the national economies are given priority over sub-national or rural economies. At present, a centralized political, economic and bureaucratic hierarchy plays the central role in development. In spite of sober statements that I referred to earlier in this talk, such as the UN Global Compact and the Manifesto on Global Ethics, multi-nationals and governments go on as usual while the poor, the hungry, the malnourished, the sick and the socially deprived are multiplying as never before.

When the shady and unethical practices of banks brought about a collapse of the world financial system, it was the world's taxpayers who were called upon to bail them out. We all know that those bank leaders maintain their lavish life styles even

today as if nothing happened. It is a community organization approach that can bring justice and fair play to the millions suffering from poverty in Asia (and in Africa as well).

I would like to advocate the concept of self-governing village or community republics that can be networked into national-level commonwealths. Mahatma Gandhi advocated for India to become a commonwealth of village republics after its independence. This is an idea to which we in Sri Lanka have to give serious thought, especially when we see nation states with centralized power failing to solve any of the problems whether they be political, social, economic, environmental, cultural or moral. The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka has been trying to build up such a village self-governance system during the last several years in over 3,000 villages out of the 15,000 villages where Sarvodaya is active. We have seen very positive results. It is our hope that our politicians will someday see the efforts we have put in for over fifty years and take them seriously.

Broadly speaking, six kinds of leaders have to be trained for a community organization of this nature. They are spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political leaders. In each of these sectors there should be several sub-sectors for which specialist functional leaders are trained. While they should have a good grasp of the national and global problems we discussed earlier, they should have a very clear vision of the rural or urban community for which they are providing leadership. They should acquire a sound knowledge of many aspects of community history, including ecological and geographical facts, demographic and economic data, sociological background, local natural and human resources, scientific and technical skills present in the community, educational levels of community members and also the problems that community members face.

When the community becomes the central focus of development, it is important that the community leaders are skilled to mobilize the entire community to participate in self-development. Community leaders should inculcate a sense of

self-dignity and pride in the minds and hearts of community residents. This should be portrayed through community self-reliance, self-sacrifice and sharing of resources for the individual as well as the common good. There is a saying attributed to the great philosopher Krishnamurthi. This saying is that 'a solution to a problem is in the problem itself'. Therefore, it is the community that has to understand the problem and find the solution. This can be called psychological infrastructure building.

In this community-based approach to development, expectant mothers, infants, preschool children, school-going youth, women, farmers, craftsmen, other employed people and elders can be organized into groups. The needs of each group can be identified and satisfied with community participation according to a plan. This can be called social infrastructure building.

Every community has certain basic needs pertaining to the environment, water supply, clothing, sanitation, housing, health care, communication, energy requirements, education, culture and spiritual awakening. These can be called basic human needs. The community should be organized and mobilized to satisfy these basic needs with the assistance of the village local government agencies and even the provincial and central government. However, the initiative must come from the community itself. This stage of community development may be called the basic needs satisfaction phase.

A community aiming at self-sufficiency and self-governance should obtain a legal status from the government under existing laws. This is the organization of community members and the registration of a community-level society with the government. In legal jargon, we call this the right to sue or be sued as a legal body. Legal advisers in the form of lawyers and counselors also are necessary for the community to become part of the national legal system.

Improvement in the livelihood of people through economic development needs should be a foremost objective of any community. One of the most important factors needed

for economic development is capital. Most communities have to pay high costs to obtain capital from banks. In our experience, we have found that alternative ways of raising capital are present within community and it is best to harness capital resources within the community itself and establish a development finance center for the community and register this development finance center as a legal society. A board of directors can be elected by the community to handle this community finance system. This saves the people from being manipulated by profit-oriented indiscriminate and irresponsible financial bodies. The capital that generally leaves the village can now be saved in the village itself. This capital now can be used to help the neediest in the community or it can be used for other community services.

This community - based economic infrastructure is a revolutionary step towards building alternative national economies that are a need of our times. One has to expect immense opposition and hardships from formal and non-formal as well as legalized and illegal vested interests. The individuals with false interest may even join in this revolutionary transformation in the financial system, but have ulterior motives as this transformation might threaten the structural and economic injustices over which they preside.

The last step in this progressive evolution towards a more participatory form of democracy in Asian communities is the restructuring of the political organization at the village or community level. Instead of a power-oriented party political system that creates many rivalries and even violence in some communities, we should be able to evolve a more democratic, participatory system where even the electors can have power to recall their elected representatives to the village council or a higher political authority. It is my firm conviction that the future survival of human and other species can occur during our lifetime.

In addition to this, it is possible in our lifetime to create a healthy environment for life to flourish on earth and to build a great new civilization that combines our ancient wisdom

and modern scientific knowledge. However, this success depends on our ability to non-violently transform the present centralized, top-down, inefficient, costly, wasteful, complex, confusing and immoral political and economic structures into more humane, transparent, simple, localized, moral/ value-based, people-centered, and participatory structures at the community level. This is not an unrealizable goal if our consciousness is transformed to utilize our ancient wisdom and modern communication technology. We can create a system of community self-governance that can be horizontally coordinated and networked at national and international levels.

I started this talk by saying that leaders should be visionaries. However, as much as it may seem difficult to achieve, truly great leaders can work with determination and vigor until they reach their visionary ideals. Great leaders are capable of inculcating their vision in the minds of their followers through humility, comradeship, empathy, sincerity, respect towards elders, recognition of true friends and hard work. Great leaders can direct their energies to realize and practice a shared vision. If we share the vision of a world order that is closer to the life of the common man, then the realization of this vision is just a matter of time. I leave this as a challenge to our present day youth leadership.

References:

Paige, G. D. (2002). Nonkilling global political science (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris Corporation, Center for Global Nonkilling.

United Nations Department of Public Information. (2009, October). Global economic ethic: Consequences for global business. Available at: http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/news_events/9.1_news_archives/2009_10_06/Global_Economic_Ethic_Manifesto.pdf.

United Nations Department of Public Information.
(2010, June). United Nations Global Compact annual
review – Anniversary edition.
Available at:[http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/news_
events/8.1/UNGC_Annual_Review_2010.pdf](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/news_events/8.1/UNGC_Annual_Review_2010.pdf).

Panel Discussion on Qualities of Leaders

JAFS- 21st Asian Network Seminar

Osaka City, Japan
October 9th, 2010

In the keynote speech I delivered in the morning, I gave a comprehensive explanation of both the theory and practice of the kind of leadership we need in Asia. Perhaps the thoughts I expressed may be relevant to the international community as well. Now I will take five minutes to outline five salient qualities that leaders should possess if they are to contribute constructively to the progress of their own communities as well as to human society in general.

1. A true leader will possess a clear vision of their own personality awakening as well as the awakening of their community or people. True leaders will liberate themselves as well as guide and liberate others. Their personal lives and public lives will have no duality or contradictions. Also, their exemplary lifestyles will be models that can be followed by many who want to serve others. A true leader is a product of the best in spiritual upbringing and moral integrity. Even in our own times we have had leaders of integrity such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King (Jr.), and Nelson Mandela.
2. A true leader will attempt to achieve good ends with good means. He/She will never resort to wrong means promising to realize good results for the community. He/She will follow the adage that the end does not justify the means. Real leaders will radiate nonviolence in thought, word and deed.

We have witnessed myriads of acts of violence or violent revolutions that promised their peoples heavens on earth during our lifetime. Considering the millions of people who were killed in these violent revolutions and civil conflicts, there were no comparable positive results by way of a greater freedom or improved livelihoods for the people. So-called freed people were left in political and economic bondage under centralized regimes. Even within the small social, economic and political space available to us as civil sector organizations, or as you may call NPOs or NGOs, immense contributions to social, economic and political development can be made.

3. We need environmentally and ecologically knowledgeable and wise leaders. These leaders will be people who understand that humanity as a whole is living far beyond its survival capacity. They will have the courage to openly reject the western model of wasteful, high energy consuming, meaningless patterns of materialist living and instead will advocate for a balanced material and spiritual wellbeing where respect for nature, respect for human life and dignity are revived. Accordingly, they will give leadership to bring about a transformation in the production, distribution and consumption systems and structures and to bring these systems and structures down to a human scale.
4. When it comes to governance, leaders will share their powers with others to the maximum extent and get people to participate in the decision-making processes. My personal opinion is that a true leader will be one who is undistinguishable from all his colleagues, will work only for the realization of a great objective and will demonstrate his work through his lifestyle, words and actions.
5. Effective leaders will be those who non-violently and wisely lead their people out of ignorance and into awareness of their problems. They will place the people before themselves and have a vision to share. They will dedicate themselves to transforming the consciousness, the economy and the power relationships in the community for the well-being of all.

A message to youth

During the Second World War, both Japan and Germany were literally obliterated. My dear Japanese youth, your grandparents went through immense suffering and your parents were provided with a new society that was an economic miracle of Asia. You grew up in virtual luxury and did not experience as many hardships. What do you think was the secret of this miraculous transformation?

Your grandparents had a vision. Some components of that vision were the rejection of violence, undefeatable courage and hope, the revival of ancient cultural and value systems, the full utilization of scientific and technological knowledge and skills, assistance, the befriending and respecting of hostile nations, and above all, the practice of humility as an individual and communal quality.

Now you have problems caused by affluence. These problems may be psychological, social, ecological, political or environmental in nature. Have you thought about a new vision and new ways to meet new challenges? Are you ready? This is the question I ask you.

**Sarvodaya Submission to the Presidential
Commission on Lessons
Learned and Reconciliation**

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Nov. 9th, 2010

Introduction

On behalf of the Sarvodaya Movement of Sri Lanka, I wish to extend our greetings and felicitations to the chairman, honorable C.R. de Silva and other honorable members of the Presidential Commission on Lessons Learned and Reconciliation. We appreciate very much the recognition your honor has given to our movement, which has been serving the people of Sri Lanka for fifty-two years. Thank you for inviting us to assist the commission in its deliberations by sharing our experiences and views. We gladly and respectfully accept your invitation.

Honorable sirs and madams, we would like to start with talking about how we as a movement and as an organization work silently and devoid of much publicity and propaganda. We do not have a propaganda or publicity unit. Instead, we cover the entire island with a nationwide network of development education programs to serve participants extending from the infant in the mother's womb to preschool and school-going children, to youth and to elderly people. In fact, it is our work that speaks for itself. We started from the secondary school Nalanda College and since then, our priority has been to instill education in all its forms. After starting at Nalanda College, we designed and implemented integrated community development programs and later formulated and added to these two a third component we call a non-violent total revolution to transform the entire Sri Lankan society. This transformation is holistic and includes spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political sectors. Together, these sectors will build a new Sri Lankan society where equality, peace and justice will prevail in a sustainable model of development.

Principally, Sarvodaya operates within three sets of laws in order of priority. The first are the dharmic laws (dharma niti), the second are people's laws (jana niti) and the third are state laws (rajya niti). We strongly believe in the dharma shakthi, or the power of righteousness. For example, we believe in the supreme power of the pancha niyama dharmas (the five cosmic laws), namely, bija niyama (cosmic law pertaining to genetic order), utu niyama (cosmic law pertaining to seasonal cycles), kamma niyama (cosmic law pertaining to cause and effect),

chitta niyama (cosmic law pertaining to the mind energy) and dhamma niyama (cosmic law pertaining to phenomena).

Similarly, we place great trust in people's inherent power and goodness or jana shakthi and do our utmost to harness their physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual energies and direct these energies towards peace and development. We have already reached about fifteen thousand village communities comprising all ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. Within these villages, there are nearly six thousand that are well organized and actively working to generate dharmic and people's energies. They are creating a psychological infrastructure and making our dream of a united and nonviolent society come true.

While our priority is dharma nīti and jana nīti, we do respect the rule of law we call rajyanīti (state laws). We know that all people cannot be disciplined by the dharma niti and jana niti alone; this is true even for Sarvodaya members. State laws are indispensable in a mundane world. Rajya nīti should be just and fair and apply equally to all and enable jana shakti and dhrama shakti to operate without any hindrance. We have always operated within the laws of the land and always upheld the fundamental principles of Sarvodaya, namely, truth, non-violence and self-denial, while also striving to uphold human rights and promote human duties. During the 1971 insurrection, none of the thousands of Sarvodaya volunteers were found to have taken part in violence. This information is directly from a statement made by the then inspector general of police, Mr. Stanley Senanayaka. The same was the case in 1987-89. Our workers did not involve themselves in any anti-government or anti-social activities, even in the north and the east. Some Sarvodaya members even sacrificed their lives to uphold the principle of non-violence.

The first lesson to be learned

We should not get into the foolish mindset that rajya shakthi, or danda shakthi, (the power of punishment the state has over unarmed people) will ever bring about a law-abiding and disciplined society that is free from terrorism. This is because governments cannot legislate the feelings of people. I am not

opposed to danda shakthi being used under the state law to deal with criminal and terrorist elements. However, I am fully opposed to passing legislation that gives protection under the law to those who are engaged in wrong livelihood (micca ajiva) such as gambling, prostitution and the manufacture and sale of alcohol and drugs. It is unbecoming for a government to pass legislation that violates the fifth principle of the Noble Eightfold Path or samma ajiva (right livelihood), while at the same time celebrating the 2,600th buddha jayanthi (2,600th year of the supreme enlightenment) of the Buddha. The principal lesson to be learned is that the state should pay greater attention to our ancient dharmic laws.

A non-partisan national movement

As our country is plagued with a power-oriented political system, Sarvodaya has always kept away from such divisive politics. At the same time, we always cooperate and work with administrative and judicial arms of the government where partisan politics is expected to be absent. The Sarvodaya Movement has eleven specialized national-level bodies that are incorporated either under the acts of parliament, the society's ordinances and/or the company's acts.

We have separate organizations and units for development education, leadership training, community development, children's services, women's welfare, legal services, peace building and conflict transformation, meditation and spiritual awakening, interfaith programs, economic enterprises, prevention and rehabilitation of drug addicts, international relations, world peace, etc. Sarvodaya has 5,231 village level societies registered under the Societies Ordinance. The organization covers every district and divisional secretariat division in the country. We have individuals from many ethnic, linguistic, religious and racial groups all working as equals in the Sarvodaya Movement.

We have a total of 1,881 fulltime staff working under different legally established independent bodies. Sarvodaya has the ability to mobilize hundreds of volunteers from villages on short notice in the event of a national crisis. Together, we call

ourselves a Sarvodaya family. There are Sarvodaya chapters in the countries of Belgium, Germany, India, Japan, Nepal, Netherlands, U.K., and U.S.A. These chapters also identify themselves as members of the global Sarvodaya family.

Sarvodaya and national reconciliation

– A brief historical background

Sarvodaya has existed for fifty-two years and for fifty of these years, national unity and reconciliation have been priority items on our service agenda. Our involvement has been holistic and continuous from 1960 up to the present day. Even during fierce fighting between the government forces and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), or the IPKF (International Peace Keeping Force) and the LTTE, Sarvodaya's non-violent non-partisan and humanitarian programs were present and were doing their utmost to help the innocent public and the victims regardless of the side they supported. Our defense forces fully supported these efforts. We were also supported by several UN Agencies and also by international governmental and non-governmental bodies.

Before I directly speak about the terms of reference of the commission, I would like to very briefly and respectfully place before the commission certain historical facts relating to the role Sarvodaya played from 1960 to July of 1983 and also from July of 1983 to May 2009 as these experiences have helped us to plan for the postwar period. I will then present my proposals. Also, I have requested that my staff independently prepare their proposals in the light of the total Sarvodaya program. That document is also being placed before the commission.

State ignoring preventative action

To anyone visiting the people in the north and east of Sri Lanka in the early sixties, it was evident that the two major communities in the country, the Sinhalese and the Tamils, were emotionally and psychologically moving towards a divided state. This division would later lead to great harm for both communities and also lead to many irreparable consequences. Although the two ethnic groups lived side by side for several millennia, the division between the Sinhalese and Tamils was

first created by the divide and rule policies of the Dutch and the British, which favored the minority groups against the majority Sinhalese. Over representation of the Tamils in the civil service was a point of resentment for the Sinhalese and this resulted in polarization of the two ethnic groups. Soon after independence, governments that followed acted imprudently when they hurriedly tried to correct the imbalance by making Sinhala the sole official language, and then again when they changed the university recruitment system and instituted a quota system that affected Tamil majority areas such as Jaffna. Other factors also contributed to the increasing polarization of Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. In my many visits to the north and east regions of Sri Lanka in the sixties and seventies, I clearly saw the growing alienation and I also saw youth becoming more aggressive and violent. We at Sarvodaya responded to the best of our capacity.

Our main concern was to prevent violence. In no way did we have any intention of preventing or hindering the struggle of the Tamils to secure their just rights in a non-violent and constitutional way. As a civil society organization, Sarvodaya took many measures to prevent violence in the sixties and seventies. These measures are listed below.

Sarvodaya established Sarvodaya centers, youth training camps and farms in Jaffna, Pungudutiv, Kerativ, Mannar, Talaimannar, Kilinochchi, Mullativ, Vavuniya, Malayaparaththikulam, Ruwanmaduwa, Trincomalee, Vishwamadu, Batticaloa, Satutukondan, Anuradhapura, Amparai, Polonnaruwa, Medawachciya, and Tanamalwila. Sarvodaya also established these centers and trainings in many more locations so that Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim youth could live together, learn each other's language and culture, practice agricultural and vocational skills, and learn the leadership skills, methods and techniques of community development in a disciplined, non-violent and spiritual environment. The training courses lasted from two weeks to three months and some even lasted one year. Tamil and Muslim youth were even brought to Sarvodaya centers and villages in Sinhala areas to familiarize themselves with life in the south. After the training they were required

to return to their villages and start village development work on their own. Except for a negligible few, our serious efforts were regarded as irresponsible and insensitive by both Sinhala and Tamil political authorities and bureaucrats. Sarvodaya also worked in close cooperation with Gandhi Seva Sangam in Jaffna and several other Hindu organizations on these kinds of programs.

Sarvodaya started a campaign to take people from the south to the north and have joint shramadana camps. For example, 1,000 youth from the south and 4,000 youth from Jaffna worked together to construct the Nirveli-Kaithadi Road in 1961. Similarly, people from Jaffna came to Bulathsinhala in the Kalutara district and Nedalagamuwa in the Kurunegala district for a similar amity camp.

When a tidal wave affected the Mannar district in the 1970's, Sarvodaya implemented a three-month relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction program. Over three hundred youth from the south joined their Tamil brothers and sisters in the program. In 1978, a cyclone struck the east coast. The intensive relief and development work done by Sarvodaya during this period gave rise to a very strong Sarvodaya organization in both the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts. All villages worked hand-in-hand and these villages still work closely together to this day. Sarvodaya staff invited eminent Indian Sarvodaya leaders like Shri Asha Devi Ariyanayakam, Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, Dr. Bhimsen Sachar, Dr. Devendra Kumar Gupta, and many others from time to time and traveled with them all over Sri Lanka; they even traveled to conflict areas in the hill country, Jaffna, Batticaloa and Trincomalee in order to promote non-violence and national unity.

I personally met heads of state, ministers, administrators, media chiefs, Buddhist monks and other religious dignitaries. I am sorry to say that except for sympathizing with our concerns and good intentions, none of them took us seriously and did not comprehend the impending danger for all people in the country. Even in January of 1971, I led many delegations and pleaded to political leaders for preventive action before the

JVP was about to launch their bloody insurrection. None of the dignitaries or politicians took us seriously until April 5th of 1971 when the insurrection finally erupted.

The lesson to be learned 002

The state should be sensitive to feelings, needs and aspirations of people in a plural society. The state should also take adequate note of relevant actions by non-state organizations. State machinery such as the C.I.D and other Intelligence Services that are maintained with taxpayer money should not be used to hunt down the opponents of the government in power. Instead, they should be used for purposes of real national security and to find out the true situation in the country pertaining to the state of law and order. I remember some previous governments making full use of academics like the late Prof. Nandasena Ratnapala and the late Prof. Nandadasa Kodagoda to assess the psychological and sociological currents in the country at that time. Today is an appropriate time to study the extent to which people suffer from different levels of trauma.

The people experiencing post-traumatic stress include ordinary people who suffered from the war, combatants who were with the LTTE, the army personnel and even others who appear to be normal. There is another category of people who believe that the opportunity has come to make money by whatever means they can, such as gambling, prostitution, drugs, bribery and corruption. When power-hungry politicians join this category of people, a chaotic and violent situation can arise in the country. This situation is likely to be worse than the situation we experienced that had only the racial-terrorist element. I plead with you, Honorable Sirs, please advise the government not to make the mistake that earlier governments made through ignoring the reality at hand; this government should instead take preventive action in time. Militarization of the country is not the answer.

When the LTTE carried out the attack in July of 1983 and killed thirteen soldiers, they were successful in instigating riots from the Sinhalese in the south. These riots left about 2,000 Tamils dead and another 80,000 to 100,000 individuals displaced.

This 'Black July' was the turning point in the history of Sinhala/Tamil relations as well as the conflict. I personally pleaded with the president to declare a curfew early in the morning of that fateful day. I was the first to plead over the media to protect innocent Tamils, for which I was reprimanded and abused by some extremist elements. I was ashamed of the silence of most religious and political leaders while innocent people were beaten and even brutally killed in broad daylight.

This wild reaction on the part of emotional Sinhalese and the apathy of the rulers and leaders paved the way for Tamil militancy to grow exponentially. The purpose of the LTTE was to instigate the riots and win sustaining support for the separatist struggle over the years by ensuring a steady supply of cadres as well as material and financial support from the Tamil diaspora. At the request of the service commanders who were appointed as the competent authorities, I toured the whole country addressing mass meetings and urged the people to refrain from violence. I urged the people to do everything possible to give relief to the affected people and bring normalcy to the country.

The lessons to be learned 003

The communal riots would not have been as intense and as bad as they were if the communal demands of the Tamil elite were met with non-communal fair play, understanding and sanity, if the government and Sinhala leaders took every measure possible to educate Sinhala people so that they would not to fall into the LTTE trap by harming innocent Tamils in the south, and if the security services maintained impartiality in enforcing law and order and dealt with looters and killers severely.

While we in Sarvodaya were in the streets risking ourselves to save human lives, we saw the perpetrators of communalism from both sides shamelessly enjoying their drinks in their balconies. Today, even one and a half years after the war has ended, I can see similar festive moods in some people and lot of lotus-eaters insensitive to the sufferings of those who lost their lives in the war and also all those who are yet to be resettled. Ratmalana Airport, Royal Junior School, and Sirimavo Bandaranaike Vidyalyaya were three of the refugee camps we

managed. When they were operating well, I drove up to Jaffna in my jeep to assess the situation of the refugees we had sent by ship and planes to Jaffna. This was eight days after the riots. The government agent Dr. Devanesan Nesiah, and the M.P. for Jaffna, Mr. Yogeswaran, were also in the Kachcheri when I entered. They were surprised to see me. They treated me kindly and accompanied me to various places where the refugees were housed. The mayor of Jaffna was also very kind. Some clergymen, including a retired bishop, severely scolded me and kept me standing for one hour just for being a Sinhalese and the accompanying Tamils, whom he said were traitors to Tamil Eelam.

The TULF leader Mr. Amirthalingam, and President Mr. T. Sivasithamparam courteously told me that they were in Eelam and the bridge had broken so they would never return to the Sinhala south. I replied to them saying that I came to rebuild the bridge with dharma shakthi and jana shakthi. I am sorry to say that they went to India and then were assassinated in the south by the monstrous organization they themselves supported and built. At the same time, the conduct of most of the Tamil elite was not much different from the Sinhalese elite.

The lessons to be learned 004

This confirmed our conviction that while constitutional amendments, etc., are necessary, the real solution to the conflict lies in the evoking of dharmic energies of people and relying on people's power to uphold our values, such as respect for life, justice and peace. Every citizen in this country can participate in this effort.

I fail in my duty if I do not mention the names of Mr. Bradman Weerakone and Dr. Wickrama Weerasuriya. These men are two former government administrators who played a critical role at this time and gave much moral and logistical support to us. From July of 1983 up to the end of the war on 18th May 2009, they assisted us at Sarvodaya in the formulation of a clear philosophy and action program. This philosophy and action program was implemented so that we could contribute to a lasting peace and also meet crisis situations as and when they

arose.

We put our program into action in spite of the heavy price we paid. We lost Sarvodaya members and many of us from Sarvodaya lost family members from both sides; people even lost loved ones at the hands of the Indian Peace Keeping Force. Tragedy struck the life of our northern district coordinator, Mr. Kadiramalai, whose wife was expecting a child at the time. Some army personnel in Vavuniya went berserk after a bomb exploded close to their house and they brutally killed Mr. Kadiramalai's in-laws. When I heard of this incident and reported it to His Excellency President J.R. Jayewardene, the President immediately sent me to Vavuniya in a helicopter with the air force commander. My task was to look into the situation. His Excellency also appointed a presidential committee to investigate the matter. At the first meeting of the committee, the coordinator who lost his family told the committee that he did not want to take revenge on the people who killed his family. He instead requested that the presidential committee wind up. He reminded us that hatred does not cease by hatred and he said karmic law would prevail and punish those who were responsible for that heinous crime; it did and these individuals were punished within the week. Our coordinator said that he would continue to work for Sinhala/Tamil unity through Sarvodaya.

Later, the terrorists in Jaffna town brutally assassinated this good, twenty-seven-year-old man as the public watched helplessly. The terrorists committed the crime close to the place where this man fed about 4,000 people in Jaffna for two weeks during the time when the IPKF prevented food from reaching Jaffna. The IPKF shot down seven Sarvodaya workers traveling in a tractor during the same time period. We experienced so many incidents of this nature, but we never were discouraged or disheartened. On the contrary, we reinforced greater courage and realized that we should continue our work on a 5R program, which we designed as a long-term approach to meet the needs of the post 1983 situation.

The 5R program is a holistic relief and rehabilitation program implemented to support people who were harmed and affected

by the violent conflict here in Sri Lanka. The 5Rs stand for:

1. Relief – Supply of immediate assistance in the form of food, water, clothing, temporary shelter, medicines, and other essential commodities to disaster affected communities.
2. Rehabilitation - Involvement of those affected by violent conflict in the process of rebuilding their lives together with Sarvodaya and providing them with support to sustain their lives.
3. Reconstruction - Rebuilding of damaged houses and the infrastructure of the community.
4. Reconciliation - Implementation of all these programs for all affected people without any discrimination. At the same time, it is important that people build back their lives collectively and keep in mind the integration of communities. It is also critical that people recognize the importance of working together towards a healing process that cures the wounds and trauma resulting from the conflict.
5. Reawakening - The providing of spiritual, psychological, material and technical support for affected people so that they can reawaken their self-confidence and self-reliance and return to the integrated Sarvodaya community self-development process.

The lessons to be learned 005

Reconciliation requires a comprehensive program such as the Sarvodaya 5R program that works towards peace and harmony. Sarvodaya uses this formula to assist the affected victims whenever a natural or man-made disaster occurs. Sometimes these programs directly transform the thought processes of the people involved and make them see the folly of ethnic or political differences and religious or racial bias. A Sarvodaya team is working to share this experience and is even working with Haiti to contribute to peace and harmony efforts there.

The first ever conference on national peace and harmony was conducted after the July 1983 riots and was held at the Bandarawayake Memorial International Conference Hall

(BMICH) on the 1st and 2nd of October 1983. About 1,200 delegates from all racial and ethnic groups participated. The four Mahanayakes of the Malwatta, Asgiriya, Amarapura and Ramanna Nikayas and a large number of reputed monks from all parts of the country took an active role in the conference. Bishops and other senior clergy from Catholic as well as other Christian denominations, Muslim Mullas and leaders, Hindu Swamies and prominent non-political Tamil leaders, businessmen, administrators and even representatives from the defense forces participated in the first day-long discussions. World-famous Hindu spiritual leader Swami Premananda was also present. That very night, the conference leaders drafted the People's Declaration for National Peace and Harmony and this was adopted on the second evening after a long discussion with conference participants. Copies of this declaration in all three languages were given to the President, the Prime Minister, all the MPs and other important people. It was also distributed countrywide for people to implement however they could. I handed the commission a copy of this declaration that describes the problem, the causes of the problem, and also the manner of removing the causes.

At this conference, it was resolved that Sarvodaya would organize mass peace rallies, peace walks, peace meditations, interfaith meetings and Shanthi Sena youth camps all over the country. The first peace walk was from Kataragama in the south to Naga Dweepa in the north. In the first week of December 1983, after nightlong interfaith poojas in Kataragama, nearly 30,000 of us commenced our peace walk to Jaffna. We covered over twelve miles and then rested for the night and conducted our meditation program and family gathering. We began again in the early hours of the following morning. Quite unexpectedly, President Jayewardene, whom we expected would join us at the inauguration in Kirivehera and failed to do so, came to Tissamaharama and publicly appealed to us to postpone the peace walk. His excuse was that a CID Report showed him that our peace walk would be attacked in several places and there would be an outbreak of violence again.

According to the information he received, he publicly said

that I would be assassinated on the way because as I was the leader of this campaign. In spite of my public appeal that we were prepared to take the risk (this appeal was supported by Ven. Prof. Walpola Rahula, Ven. Welletota Pannadassi, Ven. Ganegama Saranankara, Ven. Mapalagama Vipulasara, Rev. Fr. Tissa Balasuriya and others), the President insisted that we postpone the walk. We had no alternative but to accede to his request because we knew that no peace effort would succeed by confronting the government, especially after the President of the country personally came and made the request. As a group, we understood the political motive for this request. For that reason, I requested all of the participants to disperse, go home to their villages and areas and conduct interfaith meditations and peace walks, etc., according our BMICH Resolution.

Late Ven. Kirimetiya Pannasekera Thera, Rev. Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, a few young people and five Japanese monks from Nipponzan Myohoji, who were pupils of the Most Venerable Nichidatsu Fuji, stayed back in Tissamaharama with me. Early the next morning, we quietly took another route, avoided cities, traveled through villages and continued the peace walk. After about ten days of walking, I stayed back while the Japanese monks continued walking and beating their peace drums. I joined them from time to time in important, populated areas and joined them continuously through the Jaffna Peninsula until we reached Naga Dweepa.

We returned home the following day after fulfilling our pledge. But, 32-year-old Ven. S. Yokotsuka stayed back at our Jaffna center and continued walking through Jaffna. He continued beating the divine peace drum and chanted 'namiyo horengakiyo.' On October 28th, 1984, a cowardly LTTE cadre shot him from behind assassinated him.

In a letter dated October 25, 1984 he wrote to his parents:

I feel that until now I have not got the chance to pay homage to humanity. Now as presented in sambuddha pundarika sutra the time has come for me to die to respect humans. The Buddhists in the

south [of Lanka] respect my yellow robes. The people living here hate the southerners. I am now dedicated as Namiyo Horenge Kio to annihilate their hatred and to instill ahimsa in their minds.

After his retirement, His Excellency President J. R. Jayawardene confessed to me that he made a mistake by not allowing us to continue with the peace walk. He said that he was misled by two of his closest associates. I refrain from mentioning their names.

The lessons to be learned 006

Leaders of nations should learn to follow the Kalama Sutra without listening only to their close sycophants and flatterers. Our nationalism should not blind us to the truth and we should realize that every non-Sri Lankan is not conspiring to destabilize our country. The majority of people in the world who know about our country genuinely want everything to be settled peacefully. We should remember the response we had when the tsunami struck our country. Sinhalese and Tamils also should realize that racial prejudices are there only in a minority. Together we can bring all our people to respect one another and build a peaceful and united nation.

From time to time, we launched additional programs to meet the changing state of the peace process. On January 1st, 1987, Sarvodaya launched what we called 'A People's Peace Offensive'. From March 1999, we launched mass peace meditation programs throughout the country in Colombo, Kandy, Anuradhapura, Trincomalee, Batticaloe, Kataragama, Amapara and even Jaffna. This was called the People's Peace Initiative.

When communal violence broke out in the hill country, Mr. Gamini Gunawardene, the DIG in charge of the Central Province, got in touch with us and sought our help. I immediately rushed to the hill country and appealed through the public address system to all the people in shops and homes and asked them to open their doors and shutters without fear and to start their normal business without resorting to violence or giving

into the rioters. People responded to my appeal and within two weeks we organized a peace meditation walk with over 50,000 Buddhist, Hindu, Muslims and Christians participants, from Kandy to Sri Pada. The Hatton route was so crowded that people had to come down from the Ratnapura route as well and direct the busses there. We conducted follow-up programs after that event. To this day, communal riots have not occurred in the hill country.

A large number of people were massacred when the sacred city of Anuradhapura was attacked by the terrorists. Pilgrims became afraid to go to Anuradhapura. We immediately organized a peace walk from the temple gate of the sacred tooth relic in Kandy to Anuradhapura. When we entered Anuradhapura after an overnight stay on the 11th day in Mihintale, an estimated 125,000 people entered in silent meditation to the sacred city of Anuradhapura. Before this event, I requested President Jayawardene and Prime Minister Premadasa to come with their wives and join the meditation on the last day incognito and without prior announcement. All four of them were present along with service commanders in civilian dress. Only after this did pilgrims re-start their regular visits to Anuradhapura.

The lessons to be learned 007

The government should never depend on corrupt people, thugs, criminals and lawless elements to come into power or to remain in power. These people should be dealt with under the law without fear or favor. A government can promote good governance without entertaining corrupt people. The majority of people in a country are innocent and good. This inherent goodness of people(jana shakthi) can be awakened if the rulers are righteous. If rulers follow the dharma, they will not need many security guards around them nor will they put ordinary people like us into hardship.

The tsunami in December 2004 was a severe disaster but provided a great opportunity for us in the south to show our solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the north. While carrying out the 5R program in the south, we did an equal volume of work in the east and north. I personally visited all

LTTE controlled areas in Mullativ Killinochchi, Mannar and Jaffna with several lorry loads of relief material. Sarvodaya did not want to miss the opportunity to win the hearts and minds of the Tamil people. We have since compiled a report of these Sarvodaya tsunami relief and rehabilitation services.

On July 28th in 2005, a Youth Declaration on Peace was presented to the then Prime Minister, Hon. Mahinda Rajapaksa, at a meeting held at BMICH. This was the result of a six-month countrywide consultation with youth that was conducted during the ceasefire period. About 1,200 youth were present from all over Sri Lanka at BMICH during the presentation. Similarly, between 2006 and 2009, the Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena Movement promoted an inter-religious peace project to strengthen youth action in peace efforts.

To keep in line with the 5R Program during the escalation of the conflict in 2006, Sarvodaya began coordinating relief programs in 2008 through district centers in Anuradhapura, Kantalai, Trincomalee, Vavuniya. Sarvodaya provided services to twenty-three of the thirty-two government-run camps. These camps included six zones at Menik Farm (one of the largest relief camps in the Vavuniya district). Food items were also collected from villages around the country and distributed. Sarvodaya mobilized its national network to provide food and other essential services in the early period of the relief effort.

Our intention was to involve all sectors of the population and motivate them to take responsibility for solving the national problem. For example, together with the Chefs' Guild of Sri Lanka, Sarvodaya developed a feeding program in IDP camps called 'Joining Hands' and provided 30,000 meals daily in the Zone two of the Menik Farm. This program also trained 150 youth in culinary skills.

At the end of the first six months, Sarvodaya provided over 1,176,541 meals. About 100,000 people in several camps benefited from the water, sanitation and medical services provided by Sarvodaya. For example, the two water treatment plants provided in the Zones three and four of the Menik Farm

purified about 330,000 liters of water per day. Sarvodaya also constructed 1,100 toilets, twenty bathing sites and many laundry places. Another Sarvodaya initiative was the mobile clinic bus service that provided medical services to people in Zone four of the Menik Farm. The bus had two to three doctors who treated patients unable to walk to the hospital.

In addition to these services, Sarvodaya Legal Services Unit provided legal assistance to IDPs who lost their vital documents. They also provided a mobile library service that provided over 30,000 books for children. They also ran a special program targeting malnourished children who were given a high nutrient diet that was implemented through seventeen feeding centers.

Sarvodaya carried out all these services with the participation of several hundreds of Sarvodaya youth volunteers from all three communities. The majority of these youth was Tamil or Muslim. Sarvodaya adhered to international law and humanitarian law in postwar activities. For this reason, in all of its activities pertaining to the conflict and IDPs, Sarvodaya followed the SPHERE International Standards, international law, humanitarian law and the UN Guiding Principles on International Displacement.

When the war came to an end, we were at that time implementing a much broader, deeper and a long-term program. We called it a 500-year Peace Plan. From the beginning of this year, we once again began placing our trust more on dharma shakthi and jana shakthi. We launched the Sarvodaya Deshodaya National Assembly Project to lead towards a lasting solution to the national problem. We thought that this solution would be based on the concept of 'Commonwealth of Village Republics' a concept that we inherited from the Anuradhapura period and the ancient Indian, Buddhist republics of Lichchavi's and Vajjis.

In addition to the already stated lessons to be learned, I would like to now place before the commission Sarvodaya's views pertaining to the five matters that the commission is inquiring into. These submissions are also indicative of lessons to be learned.

1st and 2nd: Failure of the February 21st, 2002 ceasefire agreement

Sarvodaya has no comments with regard to the two matters pertaining to the ceasefire agreement and its failure. All we would like to say is that we have used every little space possible to achieve our objectives during our fifty-year period of involvement in people's participatory peace building efforts.

After the ceasefire when guns were silenced and communication was eased, we made full use of the opportunity to strengthen our welfare, development and peace work in villages in the north and east. We did this in ways I have described above. When the media asked my views on the ceasefire, I said; "I do not know what the conditions or contents are, but as long as no killing takes place I welcome them".

We believed and still believe that a more peaceful and stable society can be achieved in a lasting manner when a society does not have killing or intention to kill. I along with my wife and several colleagues made several trips to the North during the previous occasions when fighting stopped. We had discussions with community leaders, government officers and even LTTE leaders to explore every possibility for a peaceful solution. I kept His Excellency D. B. Wijetungak, the then President, informed of my visits and of the talks that I had.

3rd: Failure to address root causes of violence

The intent of having those events and discussing the concerns of those who attended the meeting was to learn and to ensure that there would be no recurrence of violence. But, to ensure that there would be no recurrence was a necessary but not a sufficient condition. It was also essential to ascertain the root cause/s of those violent events that I have spoken about. I have already referred to some of these causes.

The violent events are essentially the violence that was unleashed in the country during the ceasefire agreement period even earlier. We knew that violence was violence and it didn't

matter if it occurred through the legitimate armed forces of the country or by a terrorist group. This violence that continued and was intensely sustained over about three decades created a mindset in the country at large. This mindset was that in any dispute, solutions would have to be found through violence. Apart from this mindset, the continued violence made weapons, a massive amount of small arms, ammunition, hand-grenades, etc., available to those who should not be entitled to hold such violent means.

Almost every day now, the newspapers carry information about people who attempt to solve their grievances/problems through violent means. This mindset and the relatively easy availability of arms and ammunition have created a culture of violence in the country. The nation is no longer shocked if people are killed. Another death is just another event in a long and sustained series of such events. I remember recently being told that there are 1.9 million small weapons illegally possessed by civilians in the country.

A root cause (not the immediate cause) for the creation of this culture of violence is the feeling in the Tamil community at large that the Tamils have little to do with the formulation of national policies in this country. They often feel that they have little influence in the development of the country and are denied an adequate and fair role in the affairs of the country as a whole. For this reason, it seems natural that the Tamils should seek to carve out a part of the land where their writ would hold. Sheer self-respect demands such a course of action.

The Tamils thought that since the Sinhala Buddhist majority was not giving such powers through peaceful negotiations, then the only course of action left open for the Tamils was an armed struggle. We have to accept the fact that youth were led on a violent path to terrorism due to the failure of the Sinhalese to comprehend this reality.

The Tamil community as a whole and other numerically small ethnic groups should be made to feel that they have a say in the affairs of governance in this country. We may call this country

a Sinhala Buddhist country in the same way that the countries of U.S.A, U.K, France or Germany are called Christian countries simply because a large majority in their countries profess a particular faith or religion. It should not be the case that this be a Sinhala Buddhist Country where only the Sinhalese Buddhists wield political power. Political power should be shared in such a way that all ethnic and religious groups in this country feel that they have an effective say in the affairs of this country. This is exactly the reason why Sarvodaya believes in a system of governance based on self-governing village communities. Sarvodaya has never hidden the fact that we were inspired by the Buddha's teachings and that we are translating the Dhamma into action for the well-being of humanity. But, our focus on letting individual communities take responsibility for their own self-governance is able to win respect from all types of ethnic groups.

4th: Any person can be affected by the violent events that took place in Sri Lanka

A first consideration is to point out that any person can be affected by these violent events. Sarvodaya is of the view that all persons in this country and perhaps even Sri Lankans abroad have been adversely affected by these events. It is natural that the immediate concern is for those who have suffered personally and directly; they are more visible. They have outwardly suffered more than others. But, all of us in this country have been affected by these events. A hidden danger is that some who are affected may not be aware that they have indeed been so affected.

Sarvodaya, therefore, believes in a multi-pronged methodology, which in fact it has been implementing from the beginning of these unfortunate events. This approach is named as the 5R approach (that which I have already referred to).

A very critical feature of this multi-pronged approach is that it focuses on people-to-people interactions. It is not the case that the Sarvodaya Sangamaya implements certain activities in selected directly affected areas. This may be the outward appearance. In actual practice, it is the people affected directly

who interact with others to provide the immediate relief needed to initiate a process of rehabilitation, to build anew when necessary, and in working together, develop, understand and generate a forgiving nature. Finally, the Sarvodaya Sangamaya programs are to consolidate a process of re-awakening. This re-awakening will lay a firm foundation from which a more tolerant and healthy nation can emerge.

Sarvodaya believes very firmly that what people need is not the charity and patronage of those who have wealth. The foundation of all Sarvodaya work is the great respect it has for people. However poor or however affected people are, they have their self-respect, their dignity and something to give others. This mutual respect and understanding is a characteristic of any Sarvodaya intervention. On my way to Jaffna last month, I saw the released IDPs who have returned to their former places of residence. They were already engaged in cultivation of their small plots of land even though they have yet to build permanent shelters for themselves and their families.

Essentially, the methodology cannot simply be a government/state intervention or interventions by outside agencies. Interventions need to follow a people-to-people process. Sarvodaya has evolved practical techniques to launch people-to-people centered programs in the past five decades. But, more efforts need to be taken on all sides to keep this interaction focus. People not directly affected by the violence need to live with, work with and contribute in-kind to those who have been directly affected. Amity camps need to be created in affected areas and also in areas that are not affected directly. These camps should be an opportunity where those who have been directly affected can work together with those who have not been directly affected. This would contribute immensely to the creation of a psychological atmosphere. This would minimize mistrust, fear and alienation.

Unfortunately, the leaders of this Buddhist country have forgotten an important fact. This fact is that on our national flag, the three feet firmly placed on the ground by the lion symbolize impermanence (*annica*), an unsatisfactory state (*dukka*) and

non-ego (anatta); this is just as important as the other foot that carries the sword of righteousness and represents the *dasa raja dharma*. In my lifetime, most of our leaders ruined themselves and the country because they forgot *annica, dukka* and *anatta* as the principles that should guide personal life. Desire for permanence, comfort and ego (*nitya, sukha* and *atma*) have made most of the leaders go 'ego-crazy', not only in my country but in most other countries as well.

From this standpoint, not only leaders but also even bureaucrats and their subordinates think that they are born to rule the people of this country. Under these circumstances, the leaders treat even people like us (who have sacrificed all our lives serving the people without any expectation of reward) as mad interventionists entering into their domain. Simply because a few non-governmental organizations have been dishonest, have supported the terrorists or have been involved in power politics, it has been a convenient practice of certain political leaders to use the media and every platform they have (sometimes including the parliament) to question the integrity of even those NGOs that have been doing an honest and dedicated service to affected people.

If any government thinks that national problems can be solved by military might, bureaucratic control, media propaganda, hasty legislation, overreliance on the Prevention of Terrorist Act or other such legislation, they are committing a grave mistake that will reverberate negatively back on the government at a later time. We in the civil, non-governmental, and voluntary sector are those who should be taken into confidence by any government that wants to solve this problem non-violently and with people's participation. I am a person who has devoted his whole life to good works without seeking power, positions, wealth or engaging in bribery or corruption. I must state before this commission on behalf of the people's sector that I respectfully request the commission to recommend to the government (or any other government who will come to power later) to treat us in the voluntary sector with respect and understanding.

5th : There are institutional, administrative and legislative measures that need be taken in order to prevent any recurrence of such concerns in the future. They also need to be taken to promote further national unity and reconciliation among all communities.

The prevention of, 'any recurrence of such concerns in the future', requires, among other things, an identification of the root cause/s that led to these events and to the removal of such causes. A root cause has been briefly outlined in the Sarvodaya response and an indication has also been given on how it may be removed. This submission is an amplification of the latter.

Institutional, administrative and legislative measures have to be taken to ensure that supremacy of the people is not merely political rhetoric but instead a reality in this country. This requires concerted and effective action at national, provincial, district, sub-district, pradeshiya sabhas, and community levels. This submission is restricted to changes at the community level because Sarvodaya believes that unless significant changes are made at this level, changes at other levels may not be effective in removing the root causes I previously referred to.

Institutional, administrative and legislative changes also need to be made at the community level. About two years ago, Sarvodaya noted with great pleasure that a high-powered political delegation from Sri Lanka visited India to study the Panchayat system. The Republic of India amended its constitution to provide for even legal power to Panchayats. A nyaya panchayatlocal governance structure had legal power. I am sorry that in the implementation of this act, the Gandhian spirit was missed and instead party political systems came into the Panchayats. This has destroyed the whole purpose of the Panchayats.

In more than five decades of work with Sri Lankan communities, Sarvodaya has demonstrated that people at the community level can organize themselves and take collective decisions for

the common good. Additionally, Sarvodaya has demonstrated that people can implement such decisions with their own resources. Sarvodaya has made maximum use of the existing laws to enable several thousands of communities to realize their potential for such work for the common good.

While Sarvodaya will continue its work along these lines, the people at Sarvodaya believe that enhanced legal powers should be conferred on legally constituted and recognized community organizations. These organizations should not be creations of the government in power but instead truly representative of the people. The people at Sarvodaya believe that attempts by all previous governments and even this government to grant power to the people are marred by the irremovable desire of those in power to retain their power. All the legislative enactments passed by parliament, ostensibly to give power to the people, contain provisions that enable those in power to retain control. Examples of these include rural development societies, gramodaya mandalayas, and the School Development Board. This same tragedy is likely to be the case for the proposed jana sabhas. But, we have yet to see the legislative enactment, which for some reason is not yet available for public scrutiny to my knowledge. Under the guise of good governance and safeguarding the rights of people, governments are prone to enact legislation that essentially preserves their almost unlimited power over the people.

Sarvodaya recognizes and accepts the need for a 'state' and 'state power'. However, it firmly believes that such power needs to be conferred on the state by the people, not the other way around. The political rhetoric echoes the Sarvodaya view but the reality is otherwise.

For people to feel that they both have a role to play and functions to perform in the governance of this country (other than to just cast their votes once in a while), organizations at the community level belonging to local people should be granted legal power. These people should also be provided with the resources to make decisions and also implement these decisions in well-defined areas that have an immediate impact

on their day-to-day life. Some examples of work that may be assigned to a community could include the creation of:

- o A network of minor roads
- o Forest reservations
- o Streams and waterways
- o A pre-school
- o A primary school
- o A village fair
- o A common playground
- o A common library
- o A community-managed bank or finance development center
- o A community-managed cooperative trading system
- o A development education training center

The above suggestions do in no way imply that each and every community should be left severely alone to do what it wishes. Communities should conform to standards that are stipulated. The role of the public officers should be to offer advice and guidance to enable the community to meet the standards; the public officers should not assume the role of supervisory officers meting out punishments for failure to meet standards. Over course of time, standards may be raised. If we are really serious about devolution of power to the people today, we have at our disposal science and communication technology that can be used to horizontally link up all communities in Sri Lanka. Using all three languages, we can facilitate a national good-governance system where all citizens can enjoy equality without resorting to geographical readjustments.

The above suggestion calls for a very radical change in what is known as a public/government officer. Despite several decades of independence from British colonial rule, we still have public officers who answer only to their superior officers, who in turn answer to their superior officers and so on, until we get to the equivalent of the British officials who wield supreme power. The only difference is that we as a nation are no longer answerable to a foreign power that decides national policy. Even the change of name from 'grama sevaka' to 'grama niladhari' is evidence for

the continued existence of this mind-set epitomizing the “rulers and the ruled”.

Our national problem arises from the fact that the rulers in Sri Lanka, from the time we gained independence from the British, have been primarily Sinhala Buddhists. This has to change. Sarvodaya believes that it is easier to start the change from the bottom; Sarvodaya’s aim is to gradually build a system that is continuously answerable to the people. National unity is hardly likely to arise in a country if one set of people feel that they are ruled by another set of people and see no possibility for change in this situation. If people are of supreme importance, then there needs to be a system where the people can continuously and effectively wield their supremacy. Sarvodaya believes that such a system can be evolved starting with village communities. We can constructively use the science and communication technology at hand to link up all of these self-governing communities in a horizontal way. Geographical divisions people demand can become irrelevant in an evolutionary process like the one of which I speak. Such a system can certainly elevate the cream of our human potential (from bottom to the top) irrespective of whether or not they are Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, Burger, Malay or any other race.

If the government and the people of this country are serious about a lasting solution to the problem we have been discussing, it is essential to bring about a total integrated transformation in the consciousness of the people, in the economy of the country and also in power relationships.

References:

SPHERE Project. (2004, December). Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in disaster response. Available at <http://www.sphereproject.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=84>.

United Nations Youth Association. (2005, August). Youth declaration on peace. Available at <http://www.kateellis.com.au/speeches/31/>.

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2004, September). Guiding principles on internal displacement. Available at <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/resources/GPEnglish.pdf>.

**Reconciliation Through the Teachings
of the Buddha**

*The Twenty-fifth General Conference of the World
Fellowship of Buddhists*

Cinnamon Grand Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka
November 16th, 2010

I am deeply honored that I have been invited by the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress and the World Fellowship of Buddhists to express some thoughts based on my own experiences in the field of reconciliation through the teachings of the Buddha.

At the outset of my speech, I wish to pay my deep respect and express my gratitude to the memory of Prof. G.P. Malalasekera, the scholar, philosopher, Buddhist visionary and activist who initially encouraged me in the service of Buddha Sasana (the duty I have performed in the last fifty two years under the Sarvodaya Movement). I am also indebted, like most of you in the Buddhist movement, to Dr. Ananda P. Guruge who is among us today as a guiding spirit of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.

At this moment, for the Sri Lankan Buddhists as well as the Buddhist world, I wish to recognize and appreciate the yeoman service rendered by the young Mr. Jagath Sumathipala, President of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress, and his dedicated and energetic team that includes Dr. Praneeth Abeysundera. They are rendering this service even in the midst this era of rapid economic globalization. I would like to thank them for organizing this global event; this is not an easy task.

We in Sri Lanka went through a difficult period of nearly twenty-seven years of sporadic physical violence. The violence in 1956, 1958, 1971 and 1977 later aggravated into a civil war that started in 1983 and ended in May 2009. We recollect, though regretfully, that from independence from the British in 1948, we in Sri Lanka sowed the seeds of communal, religious and political dissension in our thoughts and words. So, it is no surprise that those evil thoughts and words one day led to physical violence. How true are the Buddha's words 'chetanaham, bhikkhave, kamman vadami', (Monks, I declare that volition (intention) is action).

Though physical violence related to racial and political causes has ceased even in the face of greater military power on the part of the government against terrorism, the causes that led to the conflict are still present. Sounds of guns are not heard. No killings between two armed forces, one legitimate, the

other illegitimate, are taking place. Yet every day someone is killed somewhere in the country reportedly from modern, small weapons. I have heard that there are 1.9 million small arms illegally possessed by civilians. This reality must be comprehended by the government as well as by community leaders, especially we Buddhists, and remedial measures need to be taken before it is too late.

As far as Buddhists are concerned, our principal objective should be to create a society where there is 'no killing or no intention to kill.' Prof. Glen D. Paige of Hawaii in his epoch making book, *Nonkilling Global Political Science*, convincingly argues and gives plenty of practical examples of how a human community can be created where the local and global communities have the potential to be characterized by no killings of humans, no threats to kill, no weapons designed to kill humans and no justifications for using weapons. This is the practice of our first Buddhist precept which is of abstinence from taking away life of sentient beings. When people resort to violence to satisfy their basic needs (such as basic need for food), then the intention to kill animals comes to their minds. This intention to kill is extended to humans for reasons including the settling of disputes, forcefully taking what does not belong to oneself, or for other immoral or illegal reasons.

I am a fifty-two-year member of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka, an organization that is not only attempting to promote the spiritual, ethical and cultural values and practices of the Buddha Dhamma, but also trying to extend Buddha's Teachings into social, economic and political sectors. I am convinced that the teachings of the Buddha is the *ekayana marga*, the only way, to resolve modern day global conflicts. This is a statement I make based on our long experience with conflict resolution in Sri Lanka.

We were inspired by the teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, the theoretical framework with which we tried to understand and study the problem was derived from Buddhism. Similarly, the solutions we tried were also based on Buddhist practice. Our work was mostly among non-Buddhist communities,

namely, Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities, and they all knew our philosophy, principles and practices were derived from the Buddhist tradition. This did not prevent them from joining with us whole-heartedly and working together with us to contribute to peace building in our country.

If we assume that the Four Noble Truths that the Buddha discovered and revealed to the world are scientific principles, then we can apply them to any problematic situation. There is the problem (*dukkha*) or suffering. It has a cause (*samudaya*). The cause can be removed (*nirodha*) and there is way of removing it (*magga*). This way is the Noble Eightfold Path. We analyzed our national problem following this methodology and developed a theoretical framework through our on-the-ground practical programs and projects. I cannot describe these programs and projects in full in this brief speech, but I will give one example.

Reconciliation per se cannot function successfully without it being an integral part of a total process of peace building. We have to address the immediate suffering that victims of violence are going through without overlooking the psychological or emotional trauma they are also going through. Similarly, they should be treated not as a problem but as a part of the solution and as the most important resource. Their minds should be given incentives to gain self-respect, self-reliance and also to build positive hope for a better and more secure future. Therefore, we implemented a program that we named the 5R Program. In order of priority, 5R represents relief, rehabilitation, reconciliation, reconstruction and reawakening.

Buddha's teachings tell us that the root of evil can be traced to *loba* (greed), *dosa* (aversions) and *moha* (illusion/confusion). Cultivating the opposites, namely, *dana* (giving, beneficence), *metta* (loving kindness) and *panna* (wisdom) is the manner in which these evils can be overcome. The 5R program is one example of this way.

Conflicts can occur not only between Buddhists and non-Buddhists, but also between followers of other different

faiths. Numerous factors like shortage of life sustaining needs, prejudices based on old beliefs and customs, political or ideological differences, leadership struggles, territorial disputes, language differences and so on can give rise to violent conflicts anywhere in the world. Therefore, when we as Buddhists come forward to play a conflict resolution role among non-Buddhist communities, we have to be cautious not to conduct ourselves in self-righteous ways. We need to make sure that we don't proselytize in the way that some agents of some religions do when they do relief or rehabilitation services for victims of war, or of any other disaster for that matter.

As I am addressing an international gathering that has come to Sri Lanka from over forty countries, I will suggest some general principles that we as Buddhists can adopt and practice in dealing with reconciliation programs in any community anywhere in the world.

The teaching of the Buddha is to respect and protect all life and never to destroy or cause any injury to sentient beings. In our day-to-day life we strive to transcend all man-made barriers of caste, creed, color, class, race and nationality, and consider the whole of humanity as one family. We wish for sabbe satta sukhi hontu, the happiness, wellbeing and awakening of all.

We practice four virtues to awaken our human personalities. These are known asmetta (loving kindness), karuna (compassionate action), muditha (learning to get altruistic joy by seeing others happy and making others happy), and upekkha (learning to accept loss and gain, name and blame with equanimity). We call this the brahma vihara (sublime abodes).

In our social conduct we strive to practice dana (giving and sharing), priyavacana (pleasant language), arthacharya (constructive actions) and samanathmatha (equality in association). These we call sangraha vastus. These four virtues of social conduct help to create a social order where there is equity in economic life, equality in human relationships, respect for human rights and human duties, development of kind, pleasing, mutually respectful and friendly language, and

the absence of promotion of evil habits like the consumption of alcohol, drugs or gambling.

Reconciliation of a conflict situation does not necessarily mean that conflict will not recur. What we should concentrate on is removing the causes that led to the conflict. This is a much broader yet harder process. To do this, we need a radical transformation in the consciousness of the people in terms of the prevailing economy and also the political power relationship in society. It is possible to develop an agenda based on Buddha's teachings for this nonviolent total transformation; this very thing has been done by the Sarvodaya Movement.

Lastly, what the Buddhist world can try to do is to create a social and psychological nonviolent energy force that can counteract violence. For example, in Sri Lanka, we organized mass interfaith peace meditation programs where tens of thousands have participated. Similarly, we organized peace meditation walks with thousands of participants. We did this after hearing about similar peace walks that were organized by Ven. Goshananda in Cambodia. Such programs will create a critical mass of peace consciousness that will positively influence the thinking of those who could resort to violence.

Reference:

Paige, G. D. (2002). *Nonkilling global political science* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris Corporation, Center for Global Nonkilling.

**Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba's
85th Year of Advent:
A Humble Tribute**

85th Birthday Celebrations of Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba

Rama Mission, India
November 23rd, 2010

Mr. A. B. Talagune, chairman, office bearers of Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba's Seva Samiti, and my dear sisters and brothers who have assembled this evening at the Ramakrishna Mission to commemorate the 85th Year of Advent of Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba onto our planet, I extend my love, deep respect and felicitations to all of you.

I feel very humbled by your invitation, especially when I read the notice that mentioned the gathering would be held under my distinguished patronage. I do not deserve this distinction as I am like all of you, a follower of the Buddha and a humble devotee of Baba who is striving to practice what he is teaching.

In the Maha Mangala Sutra, Buddha taught us thirty-eight virtuous deeds that bestow blessings on us. One is poojaca pooja niyanam, venerate those who deserve veneration. In the contemporary world, very few can be considered qualified for veneration. But certainly Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba is one of the foremost among them.

In his own words: "Truth is my message, dharma is my practice, shanthi is my nature, prema is my swarupa – follow these, you are mine and I am yours." Baba wants to bridge the gap between him and us. He clearly shows us the way. We have only to diligently follow the path of the truth, dharma, peace and love of all; all of which he is a living example.

He says he is not trying to found a new religion. He is only beseeching us to diligently practice the religious teachings we already know. When I had the good karma to meet him and have his darshan blessing for the first time in June 1982, he cautioned me in a private conversation about the impending danger that my country was going face in about a year's time. The reason he gave for this impending danger was that Buddhists, Hindus and people of other faiths have turned their backs to the sacred spiritual teachings of their respective religions and have been rushing towards worldly material gains, such as wealth and political power. This arouses people's racist and communal feelings, which only results in harnessing the evil energies of greed, hatred and illusion. He told me that it was too late to

reverse this destructive trend in Sri Lanka because a critical mass of violent consciousness had already been created. However, Baba encouraged me by saying that he would always bless the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. He urged me to go ahead and fearlessly work for peace and strictly follow the Buddha's teachings of loving kindness to all beings, non-violence and selfless service to all those in need. From that day up to my daily meditation today, I have shared with him the merits I have acquired and sought his blessings for our good work.

I do not want to say anything as to what happened after Baba's warning of impending danger in our country. Nor do I want to blame anybody for the countless lives lost, sufferings we underwent, the wounds created in our hearts and material losses that could have been better utilized. We should collectively take the responsibility for what happened in the past. At the same time, we should play a collective role in building a new society in the future. No government, individual (however powerful he or she may be), civil sector organization, or military regime can singularly take on this task. Every single individual, organization and government in our society should contribute to building a new society. What is Bhagvan Sri Satya Sai Baba's advice to us to achieve this goal?

I ask your permission to quote a few words from him and express how I understand these words and practice them in the context of building a new society. He says "Truth is my message".

According to Buddha's teachings, we should develop wisdom to see things as they really are. The deeper we go in developing wisdom, the more we realize that all living things are interrelated. Therefore, it is needless to say that all of us humans should understand the truth in that we are all interlinked and that the wellbeing and happiness of each person is dependent on the wellbeing and happiness of all; this was defined by Mahatma Gandhi as *antyodaya* and later as *sarvodaya* after reading John Ruskin's book, *Unto This Last*. The famous Vietnamese monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, coined the word "inter-being" to help us understand this truth more easily that "I live in you and you live in me and we live in all others". If we in Sri Lanka learn this truth

of oneness of all, this can be the founding thought of a new society where we discard all other labels we have attached to ourselves and truly become Sri Lankans.

When Baba says, “Dharma is my practice, I understand it from a Buddhist point of view such as abstinence from killing or the intention to kill, abstinence from stealing, abstinence from sexual misconduct, abstinence from lying and abstinence from taking intoxicating substances”, these are the five precepts we are expected to practice. To a Buddhist, anitya, dukkha and anathma or non-substantiality, un-satisfactoriness and ego-lessness, respectively, are the true understandings of life. Yet, some humans through their ignorance of dharma take nitya, sukha and atma, or permanence, satisfactoriness and egoism are the realities. When taken to these illusions, one can commit any sin without realizing the karma vipaka or the evil consequences that will follow one’s actions.

When Baba says, “Your ego props up in front of me several times, I teach you to crush it,” it is this dharma he preaches. He beseeches us to be divinity; he teaches us to be less human every day and take a step towards divinity.

When he says, “shanthi is my nature,” his serene, composed, compassionate and smiling face comes to mind. He has no worries, desires or plans. He has a mind and a heart where supreme peace reigns. He urges us to be victorious and take control of our senses and be our own masters. I am reminded of Buddha’s kalama sutra when Sri Satya Sai Baba says, “Examine the guru and his credentials and ideals and practices before accepting him. Even in my case, do not be attracted simply by stories or what I create by a wave of my hand etc. Do not jump to conclusions.”

“Prema is my swarupa” Baba says. This has a deep meaning to me. The greatest virtue I have seen in him is his boundless love towards all without any discrimination. When a sinner approaches him he has a divine insight to know it. He knows exactly why he is coming to him. At the same time a true devotee who is honestly trying to practice his teachings approaches him

he would have the same compassion and love towards him. He knows it is not he but we ourselves who have to sow the seeds and reap the good or bad harvest. When I saw him for the first time in Puttaparti, he knew I had violated a certain rule in the ashram, but he never was angry or took me to task. He simply smiled and like a father kindly advising his child softly said, "You will eventually give it up. It is bad for your health." That is his prema, his love for all.

The last time I physically met him was when my dear friend and devout Sai devotee Mr. Wanniyasekeram recently took me to Puttaparti to deliver a Buddha Jayanthi talk in the presence of Baba. He had me sit beside him and he told me that he appreciated the work that I am doing with a Sarvodaya colleague. He created a bracelet to be seen by all and fixed it himself in my hand. He said, "Peace will come and the real work has to start to sustain it." His blessings will be with me always.

Dear sisters and brothers, in the name of Sri Satya Sai Baba on this auspicious day of his advent to our midst, I plead with you to make a pledge to yourself within your hearts that, as the Buddha Dhamma said, we shall purify our hearts from greed, ill-will and illusion and strive to reach enlightenment by cultivating beneficence and love towards all. We shall apologize to those to whom we have done wrong and we shall forgive those who have wronged us. We shall abstain from leading affluent life styles but take to simple living styles. We shall open our hearts towards all those who are suffering as a result of the period of senseless violence we went through for decades and extend our maximum help to provide basic necessities to them including housing, health care, education and other basic human needs. We shall create a new society in Sri Lanka where we can live in peace and plenty as one human family by transcending all man-made barriers and becoming a shining example to this divided world.

In conclusion, let us close our eyes for a few minutes and wish Swamiji good health and long life to lead to greater spiritual heights and lasting peace.

Reference:

Ruskin, J. (1997). *Unto this last*. C. Wilmer, (Ed.). London, England: Penguin Group.

Buddhism and Peacemaking

Submission for

“Peacemaking: From Practice to Theory.”

Susan Allen Nan, Zachariah Cherian Mampilly,

and Andrea Bartoli, Editors. Westport,

CT: Praeger Security International, 2011.

April 28th, 2011

Introduction

In this essay on Buddhism and Peacemaking, I do not discuss Buddhism in the conventional sense of a religion. I confine myself to a small fraction of the Teachings of the Buddha (or Buddha Dhamma) as I understand it and its relevance to peacemaking. This essay is not at all an academic thesis. I have been a practitioner of Buddha's teachings in my personal, family and community life from my childhood. For over fifty years, I have been an active member of the Sarvodaya Movement, a movement that attempts to translate Buddha's Teachings into development and peace. This experience has given me the conviction that if Buddha Dhamma is properly understood and practiced by citizens of the world and the rulers of our countries, then peace in our lives, societies and the global community is a realizable goal.

Buddha Dhamma is more relevant to this life and this world rather than for an after-life heaven or liberation. It touches every aspect of human life – personal conduct, family relationships, social behavior, economic development, environment and political organization. The sum total of Buddhist practice is personal contentment and happiness for the individual, and, peace and harmony in society.

Buddha Dhamma is not a sectarian teaching or a dogma that can be followed only by a group calling them selves Buddhists. It is a discovery made by the Buddha into the reality of things as they exist, which includes the true nature of the human personality, its relationship to the rest of human society, the living world and nature as a whole. He teaches us to follow a certain code of ethics, develop right mindfulness, and finally acquire a level of wisdom which will lead us to overcome all our defilements arising from greed (lobha), aversions (dosa), and ignorance (moha) which are at the root of all our sufferings. The acquisition of this wisdom will generate lasting peace and happiness. No individual owing to his or her beliefs or creed is barred from trying out The Path He proclaimed.

This essay is for the average reader and not for academics and scholars. But, as The Buddha reminded us many times, Buddha

Dhamma is for wise and heedful people. So, some understanding of the teachings of the deeper aspects of Buddhism is necessary. In its most simplified form, with Pali words (in italics) from the Buddha Dhamma, I discuss those important topics. I also have attempted to have the reader practice what is explained here and build right relationships, both within one's self and with others. After all, in Buddhism, peace is synonymous with total harmony.

Supremacy of the mind

In the Dhammapada, the well-known Buddhist text, the first two stanzas are as follows: (As translated from Pali by Ven. Narada)

1. Mind is the forerunner of (all evil) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with a wicked mind, because of that, suffering follows one, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox.

*(Manopubbangamadhamma-Manosettha manomaya
Manasa ce padutthena-Bhasati va karoti va Tato nam
dukkhamanveti-Cakkam va vahato padam)*

2. Mind is the forerunner of (all good) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, because of that, happiness follows one, even as one's shadow that never leaves.

*(Manopubbangama dhamma-Manosettha manomaya
Manasa ce pasannena-bhasati va karoti va Tato nam
sukkhamanveti-chaya va anapayini)*

From the above words of the Buddha we see the foremost importance He gave to our mind and its purification. We ourselves are mainly responsible for creating misery or happiness in our personal life, family life or community life depending on the state of our mind. No individual can purify another. Buddhism places a heavy responsibility on each one of us to transform oneself first before one attempts to transform others or the society as a whole. For this reason, peacemaking

depends mostly on the state of the mind of each individual involved. Therefore, individually as well as collectively, we have to strive to create a state of pure consciousness where abstinence from evil and promotion of good is cultivated.

I will confine myself to only a few out of numerous teachings of the Buddha that have helped us at the Sarvodaya Movement to contribute, even in a small way, to transform our own lives and facilitate peacemaking efforts in our country.

Purification of the mind

Situations of conflict leading to endless wars and bloodshed first arise in our minds. When one's mind gets into a frame of thinking where it differentiates itself as a separately existing entity from others, that thinking brings mental alienation from others (chanda) along with three other mental conditions. These conditions are ill will or aversions (dwesha), fear (bhaya) and illusion (moha). In the Pali language these are called the 'four evils' (satara agathi). The Buddha taught us how to combat these four mental defilements by developing the 'right understanding' of the concept of 'I' or 'self' and cultivating what He called the 'Four Sublime Abodes' (satara brahma vihara).

Understanding 'I'

It is this illusory concept of 'I', 'me', 'mine', that separates 'me' from everybody and everything else. One thinks that 'I' possess things, desire things, like and dislike things. Accordingly, 'I' use my words and engage in all sorts of deeds. The Buddha taught us to investigate and find out where this 'I' is. According to His simplest analysis, a person is composed of mind (nama) and form or body (rupa). Mind can be divided into five factors; namely, contact (phassa), feelings (vedana), sensations (sanna), dispositions (sankhara) and consciousness (vinnana). The body can be divided into Hardness (patavi), liquidity (apo), heat (thejo) and air (vayo). In any of these nine factors, one cannot find anything unchanging. All of these nine factors are subject to change. If we cannot find an unchanging 'I, a soul, or a self' in any one of those factors, then how can we identify ourselves with an 'I' or an 'ego'? The 'I' or 'ego' is an illusion we have created by ourselves in our mind.

Our body and mind are in contact with the physical world at all times. Eye (chakku) contact (phassa) with form (rupa) gives rise to eye-consciousness (chakku-vinnana). Ear (sotha) contact with sound (sadda) gives rise to Ear-consciousness (sota-vinnana). Nose (ghana) contact with smell (gandha) gives rise to nose-consciousness (ghana-vinnana). Tongue (jivha) contact with taste (rasa) gives rise to tongue-consciousness or (jivha-vinnana). Body (kaya) contact with objects (pottabbha) gives rise to body-consciousness (kaya-vinnana). Mind (mano) contact with phenomena (dhamma) gives rise to mind-consciousness (mano-vinnana).

Through these six sense bases, the human being comes into contact with the external physical world continuously. These contacts give rise to volitions (cetana). These volitions are the bases for all our karmas performed by thoughts, words and deeds. It is this understanding of impermanence and change in the human being we should strive to develop. Our body and mind and everything we claim as ours and assume as everlasting, including those very thoughts and feelings, are subject to impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha) and non-ego (anatta), signifies that there is no permanent entity or ego or soul that can be found; there exists no 'I'. Through various teachings, the Buddha shows us that this understanding of 'I' as linked with everyone and everything else will lead us on the path of abstaining from evil thoughts, words and deeds towards others. The understanding that the concept of 'I' is an illusion will instead lead us towards cultivating opposite qualities such as loving kindness, compassionate service, altruistic joy and equanimity.

Building right relationships

If every human being could be given this right understanding about how the concept of 'I' is an illusion, that itself would be the biggest contribution that anybody could make to peacemaking. People with this right understanding strive to always build harmonious relationship with others because they recognize their oneness. However, in this materialistic world, our six senses are always driven to seek pleasurable contacts.

When there are obstacles to making such pleasurable contacts or one is faced with painful experiences, then such a person can have a tendency to react in a way where evil thoughts, words and deeds are generated. It is not easy to convert a person with such negative tendency to develop right understanding, right thoughts, right words, right deeds and right livelihood. A seeker of spiritual enlightenment has to observe certain precepts, practice the four sublime values and follow what in Buddhism is called the Noble Eight-fold Path. These values and this Path will be described in a later section of this essay.

Observing precepts

The Buddha has enunciated certain precepts that can be followed by all human beings according to the spiritual level one aims to attain. These precepts show Buddhists how to make right relationships within themselves and with others. These precepts may range from observing five ethical principles by the ordinary householder or layman, to several hundred precepts that have to be practiced by those who aim to get complete freedom or liberate themselves from all suffering in the cycle of births and deaths that we all are caught in. Practicing the higher precepts is only for people who renounce their worldly life and go in search of the ultimate truth and unconditioned peace that Buddhists call Nirvana. These are the order of Buddhist monks who have to follow very detailed ethical principles to completely bring under control their mind and totally remove all defilements of greed, aversion or ill-will and delusion.

Those of us who want to participate in peace making activities may have Nirvana as the ultimate goal, but cultivation of the five precepts, namely, non-killing, non-stealing, non-sexual misconduct, non-lying and non-consumption of intoxicants are the five minimum ethical principles one has to develop as a prerequisite to get into peacemaking work. To build right relationships with the rest of the community, observing these five precepts is indispensable.

In an earlier part of this essay, I mentioned that mental alienation, ill-will, fear and illusion occur simultaneously and are interactive and interdependent. To overcome these four

evils, it is essential that one should strictly observe the above-mentioned five precepts.

Four sublime values

The Buddha promoted right relationships and peace making through his four sublime values. He gave highest importance to loving-kindness (metta). He beseeched us to develop love towards all sentient beings in the same way 'a mother loves her one and the only child.' Buddhists give priority to practicing 'meditation on loving kindness' (metta bhavana) individually and in large groups in all our peacemaking efforts. The second sublime virtue is 'compassion' (karuna). When we are motivated by loving-kindness, we develop empathy with those who are in need and engage ourselves in helping them. We can call these actions compassionate actions. Seeing the joy of living that others enjoy or get as a result of our actions we develop within ourselves a similar joyous feeling or an 'altruistic joy' (muditha). This is the third sublime virtue. Some appreciate this kind of virtuous conduct while there may be others who despise such qualities. We may succeed or fail in our mission however genuine the efforts we may have put in to it. Peacemakers need to comprehend this human nature and learn to treat loss and gain, name and blame with equal detachment. This sublime quality is 'equanimity' (upekkha). The Buddha also called these four sublime qualities satara brahma viharana, implying that in a heavenly world known as bhrahma loka, the beings always live with these sublime qualities. A person who cultivates these four virtues is set to be living a peace-filled life comparable to those heavenly beings that are called bhrahmas.

Practice of metta

I will now give some simple examples that show how these virtues leading to right relationships are practiced in real life peacemaking situations. First, imagine a situation where a family, group of people or a community is in a conflict situation. When one intervenes to bring about some settlement or create a friendly atmosphere, one's mind should be completely free from any religious, linguistic, racial or any other sectarian kind of bias. As far as the peacemaker is concerned, all human beings are the same in spite of certain external appearances,

states of mind, or different ways of their conduct. All people are composed of those nine factors I mentioned, all of which are subject to change every moment and have no absolute existence. This state of mind where one extends loving kindness towards all beings is the first principle that one has to practice when entering the peacemaking field. With this thought of loving kindness, one may speak to different groups very kindly using pleasant language to try to make the groups understand the futility of egocentricity and enmities and understand the value of friendship. Even if one is not able to completely succeed, one may succeed in getting some from these dissenting parties together and draw their attention to a common activity that is useful to all parties.

For example, in a Sri Lankan village where there is no clean drinking water, we at the Sarvodaya Movement sit down with the people of the village and practice loving kindness meditation for some time. We work to get all the villagers to agree to come together to dig a well to access clean water. This kind of action translates loving kindness into constructive work that is compassionate action. After doing a constructive activity of this sort, people experience sympathetic or detached joy. In this state, they forget their differences. Additionally, more people begin to join. When people are brought together in a spirit of love to overcome differences and realize their connectedness, we consider it a peacemaking activity.

In the Sarvodaya movement, when we recruit volunteers to come forward to do peacemaking activities, we always tell them that there is a great benefit that comes to them if they can participate in any activity that helps people, always keeping in mind the four sublime principles of loving kindness, compassionate action, altruistic joy, and equanimity. Another way we describe these four principles is by naming them as factors of total personality awakening.

Recently in Sri Lanka, there was a civil war between a rebel group and the government that lasted for nearly 30 years. While the civil war was going on, the Sarvodaya Movement implemented a program called the '5R Program,' namely,

‘relief,’ ‘rehabilitation,’ ‘reconciliation,’ ‘reconstruction’ and ‘re-awakening’ activities. As a part of the National Reconciliation Program, the Sarvodaya Movement organized and led mass peace meditations and peace marches with tens of thousands of participants. The people who participated belonged to different castes, creeds, classes, races and communities, but everyone participated having pledged to cultivate the four sublime qualities and discard from their minds and hearts the four evil qualities that lie at the root of all violence. Later in this essay, I will describe the forms of meditation (bhavana) that we practiced on a mass scale.

Principles of group awakening

In addition to observing the five precepts and abiding by the four sublime values in peacemaking activities, Sarvodaya works in groups and with large numbers of people and therefore we need a code of group ethics to guide us in making right relationships. We always follow four principles of group conduct that Buddhism teaches us. We remind participants that there are four principles of social conduct that we should always observe when we undertake a peacemaking mission of this nature and in all occasions we interact with others.

First, we should consciously share our love, our feelings, our thoughts, and all of our actions with everybody else. ‘Sharing’ or ‘giving’ (dana) is a principle we should always remember and practice when we work together. Whether it is with food, accommodation or work, entertaining ourselves by song and dance, or the recognition we receive, our efforts should be based on the principle of sharing. Secondly, we should always use ‘pleasant language’ (priya vacana) in our conversations. That is, we should always speak the truth, abstain from lying or using harsh words, slandering or gossiping. This is called pleasant speech. Thirdly, when we are in a group, we always should abstain from doing anything destructive. Everything we do should be ‘constructive work’ (arthacarya). We should abstain from intoxicants, from hurting even the smallest creature, and from engaging ourselves in unnecessary, frivolous forms of merry-making or misconduct. Fourthly, we should observe the principle of “equality” (samanathmatha) in association. These

four forms of social conduct should be collectively named in Sri Lankan culture as satarasangraha vattu.

Chain of cause and effect

The lack of peace in a society does not result from one cause, but many causes that are related to one another. This reality has to be comprehended by all who try to engage themselves in building right relationship and peacemaking. While we are aware of the psychological or mental causes that lead to conflict, we have to recognize other equally important causes such as economic, political and cultural factors that contribute to bringing about conflict situations in our societies. All these have to be tackled simultaneously. I will discuss those external factors later in this essay.

Also in our own personalities, a causal chain works all the time to bring about continuous change in our body and mind and also in our relationships with the outside world. In the same way, in the world outside of our own personal world, the cycle of cause and effect operates relatively.

This principle of conditionality is summed up in Buddhist teachings by two important principles.

One: *‘When there is this, that is. With the arising of this, that arises.’*

Two: *‘When this is not, neither is that. With the cessation of this, that ceases.’*

This ‘principle of conditionality’ (also known as ‘Dependent Origination’) is acknowledged by all Buddhist scholars as the most profound and important contribution made by the Buddha to theory of knowledge in the world because it demonstrates interdependence. This is called in Pali as the paticcasamuppada dhamma.

The principle of dependent origination (paticcasamuppada)

The simplest literal meaning of paticcasamuppada is “dependently arising” and this doctrine emphasizes the fact

that everything arises and exists in relation to everything else. This is true for our inner world as well as our outer world. An understanding of this natural law of causal interdependence enables us to follow a path of spiritual liberation as well as to bring about changes in human society and the physical environment that enable us to achieve peace and happiness.

First, I will briefly explain how the principle of *paticcasamuppada* operates in human personalities. In many of His Discourses, the Buddha explained this unique doctrine in great detail. My aim is to introduce this most important teaching as a practical guide for peacemakers. It is my hope that this knowledge about relativity between conditioned states and interdependence of all conditioned states can be as useful in the work of other peacemakers as it has been useful in our work at the Sarvodaya Movement.

There are twelve links in the cycle of interdependence. They are ignorance (*avijja*), dispositions or volitional impulses (*sankhara*), consciousness (*vinna*), mind-body (*nama-rupa*), six sense bases (*salayatana*), contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedana*), craving (*tanha*), clinging (*upadana*), becoming (*bhava*), birth (*jati*), aging and death (*jara, marana*). Death is linked to sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*), and despair (*payasa*).

These twelve factors that arise interdependently explain the origin as well as the cessation of the whole mass of suffering we all are subject to; this suffering exists whether we realize it or not.

Overcoming ignorance (*avijja*)

It is the ignorance of suffering or *dukkha*, its cause or *samudaya*, its cessation or *nirodha* and the path or *magg* leading to its cessation. The Buddha proclaimed to the world what is known as the "Four Noble Truths" or (*chaturarya satya*):

1. Noble truth of suffering (*dukkha arya satya*)
2. Noble truth of the cause that brings about suffering (*dukkha samudaya arya satya*)

3. Noble truth of ceasing the cause (dukkha nirodha ariya satya)
4. Noble truth of the path to ceasing the cause of suffering (dukkha samudaya nirodha ariya satya)

From the Fourth Noble Truths, the Noble Eight-fold Path (ariyo attangiko maggo) is also known as the middle path, the golden mean. As this path avoids both extremes of self-indulgence (kamasukhallikanuyoga) and self-mortification (attakilamathanuyoga) in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, it is known as the middle path.

‘Volitional impulses’ or ‘dispositions’ (sankhara) are mental, verbal or bodily formations, and they are conditioned by ignorance of reality. All the twelve factors that arise are subject to mutual conditioning. Conditioned by dispositions consciousness (vinnana) arises. Conditioned by consciousness mind-body formation arises. With mind-body as condition, the six sense bases arise. One can begin to remove the conditioning at any point of the twelve factors mentioned above.

By right understanding of the Four Noble Truths and following the rest of the steps in the Noble Eight-fold Path, a Buddhist practitioner can follow a process of non-conditioning.

The Noble Eight-fold Path

Right views	(Samma ditti)
Right thoughts	(Samma sankappa)
Right words	(Samma vaca)
Right actions	(Samma kammantha)
Right livelihood	(Samma ajiva)
Right effort	(Samma vayama)
Right mindfulness	(Samma sati)
Right concentration	(Samma samadhi)

A Buddhist’s path to enlightenment is in this Noble Eight-fold Path. The peace we are looking for is within our own selves. This peace can be realized only following this path. The first two steps mentioned above, right views and right thoughts, can be categorized as development of wisdom (panna). The next

three steps, right words, right deeds and right livelihood, are in the realm of developing morality (sila). The last three steps, namely right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration are grouped under concentration (samadhi).

War is the worst form of suffering that human beings create in the world; millions undergo untold painful experiences including death. Craving that is created in the human mind causes this suffering. What is manifested externally as bloody conflict and destruction is the cancerous multiplication of this evil in the tangible form of human words and deeds. This is the principle of dependent origination at work in our socio-economic and political organization.

Though it is not easy, yet by following the above middle path we can bring about a 'cessation to craving,' which in turn will bring about an end to 'suffering'. Instead of conditioning our minds to accumulate more and more greed, aversions and ignorance, we should release a reverse process to accumulate more and more non-greed, love and wisdom.

I will illustrate from the paticcasamuppada doctrine this law of nature in operation. This illustration will highlight interdependency in the outer world:

'Phassa paccaya vedana'- 'Dependent on contact sensation arises'

'Phassa nirodha vedana nirodha'- 'When contact ceases sensation ceases.'

Interdependency in the outer world

In the same way, twelve factors of dependent origination operate in our personal lives and result in suffering in the outer world; there are also interdependent factors that result in conflicts and war. For example, large numbers of people are employed in production of armaments, in armed forces, and related services. All these have become an integral part of the social, economic and political systems of society. They are all interrelated.

A Buddhist agenda for peacemaking

While peace or war originates in the mind of an individual, it can spread to the minds of other individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations like a virus. Therefore, while Buddha Dhamma gives priority to the purification of our individual minds, it also has built traditions, conventions and customs that people follow as families and communities in Buddhist societies that function like immune systems built into the social fabric.

In the history of Buddhist countries, there are plenty of instances where kings and other leaders avoided war and bloodshed by personal intervention or through negotiation. One difference between then and now is that the interdependent causal cycle that is built into today's global society did not prevail back then.

We are now living in highly consumer-oriented times. This consumerism is not confined to the satisfaction of our basic needs. It goes much beyond that. We are conditioned by advertisements and tempted to imitate those who live a life of wasteful affluence. People develop a greed for more and more material and nonmaterial things to satisfy their six senses. They mistake their momentary satisfaction for true happiness. The inevitable result is increasing selfishness and competition. This self-centeredness and competition is not confined to consumers alone. It is prevailing in a much more virulent and deadly form among those who produce goods and services for the consumption of others.

Profit-motivated sectors of production, transportation, distribution, marketing, advertising and all other related fields of business have taken control of our societies. Unsustainable, wasteful, chaotic, corrupt and violent systems have taken control as well. These structurally violent systems have fed on one another and have completely destroyed the ethical codes that were present in our traditional Buddhist communities. We no longer can place any trust in our pyramidal social, economic and political institutions. The helplessness of governments, intergovernmental organizations (including UN bodies) to face this plight is extremely evident. However, if these bodies

did not exist, then anarchy and complete chaos would result, expediting the end of our present civilization. Perhaps the only hope is a bottom-up movement of total awakening.

Through applying the Buddha's 'theory of dependent origination' to the outside world situation (including our ecological and environmental conditions), we can clearly see how the 'cycle of organized greed, hatred and ignorance' is operating and how this cycle is taking the whole of humanity, the living world and nature on a path of total extinction. All of us and everything else in the world is at war with itself and each other.

Buddhism is not a teaching that is pessimistic and spells doom. It is a teaching that not only shows the reality of suffering, but also how this suffering is caused, how it is removed and the path to happiness and enlightenment. Therefore, those of us who believe in peacemaking use Buddhist teachings to make peace within our individual selves before we try to make peace within our families and communities. For nearly fifty-two years, the Sarvodaya Movement has developed programs to further the Awakening of Personalities, Families, Rural and Urban Communities, National Communities and the World Community. These programs have been concerned with six interrelated and interdependent factors that are spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political.

All communities in the world are influenced by the global chaos I have already referred to. There are honest attempts by leaders to better the situation, for example, the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan's Global Compact directed at corporations is a great example of such an attempt. But can we honestly say that the leaders of multinational corporations adhere to the nine principles that are laid down in the Global Compact? Can these leaders minimize their greed for profit without knowing and practicing the kind of spiritual teachings to which we devoted the majority of this chapter? Will we ever succeed in getting these leaders to exchange their energy-consuming and luxurious lifestyles for a more simple way of living? A people's participatory movement like Sarvodaya can get the farmers, traders and others in the community to practice these nine

principles more effectively. Such a Movement can induce the people to follow a life of simplicity and sustainability. Similarly, the UN Children's Charter, International Humanitarian Laws and other universally accepted codes of ethics or international conventions can be simplified, communicated and effectively implemented at the community level. Peacemaking according to Buddha Dhamma can be initiated successfully from the community level and spread outwards and upwards.

Sarvodaya is educating members of grassroots communities by teaching them these laws and principles in a simplified way as is applicable to their communities. Sarvodaya is helping these communities merge modern scientific knowledge with their traditional Buddhist cultural values. Peace educational programs, seminars, workshops and even large peace conferences are organized in such a way that the ancient wisdom taught by Buddha Dhamma and modern scientific knowledge is harmonized.

Today, Sri Lankans are politically free and we elect our own rulers. But, we are no longer a society where Buddhist values prevail in our social, economic and political institutions. The greater influence comes from materialistic and competitive value systems where human greed and resulting animosities dominate our personal and social life. A Buddhist approach to peace making at a national and international level promoted by governments is unthinkable in the modern context of our world. It is foolish to assume that the majority of the ruling and wealthy elite in our countries can ever be made to realize that like everything else and all others, their lives are also subject to the universal principles of impermanence, suffering and non-ego. They cannot enjoy forever the false concepts of permanence (nicca), comfort (sukha) and egoism (atta). Yet a Buddhist agenda for peacemaking can be formulated and implemented by civil society organizations as done by the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka with success. These certainly have a positive impact on individuals, families and rural and urban communities.

To put this Buddhist agenda into practice, Sarvodaya has

implemented a number of peace programs including programs on community organization and community awakening, peace education, peace Seminars and workshops, peace conferences, mass meditation programs, interfaith activities, peace walks, peace brigades, relief and rehabilitation programs, village-to-village link-up programs and family stays. Organizational structures grounded in Buddhist theory have been developed to implement these programs.

Five-stage awakening process

There is no short cut to global peacemaking. It has to begin at the level of grassroots communities and gather momentum and synergy in order to spread horizontally and vertically. Through the various different programs mentioned above, the Sarvodaya Movement helps communities move through five stages of awakening. The first is what we call 'psychological infrastructure building'. Organizing a development or welfare program that benefits the whole community through a focus on self-reliance and community participation is the technique that we have developed to help the people overcome their egoistic feelings and become a part of the community. This is a direct and practical way to overcome egocentricity and build a collective consciousness.

The second stage is the organizing of the different age groups like the preschool children, school going children, youth, women, farmers, craftsmen and other professionals so that all can be related as participant beneficiaries in a basic needs satisfaction program that incorporates the whole community. This stage is called the 'social infrastructure building' stage.

The third stage is the organization of a village level society that can be incorporated under the prevailing laws of the country. Once a village society is awarded 'legal recognition,' it can undertake economic activities and even employ community members as the employees of the village society. This is the initiation of a stage in the village where a new corporate personality comes into existence and the ancient conventions and modern legal requirements can be harmonized. The Buddha recognized 'seven factors of non-degeneration' (sapta

aparihaniya dharma) that prevailed in ancient village republics of His day (two examples of these republics are Lichchavis and Vajjins). These seven principles have been incorporated into Sarvodaya village society constitutions.

They are: 1. The Village community meets regularly. 2. They meet in peace, discuss in peace and disperse in peace. 3. They make decisions with unanimity. 4. They give priority to the safety and protection of children and women. 5. They respect all religions and welcome wise and religious people to attend and address their community meetings. 6. They obey the laws that are already in existence and do not impose new laws that cannot be enforced. 7. They celebrate traditional festivals irrespective of to which religion or faith they belong.

The fourth stage of the Sarvodaya village awakening movement is the 'implementation of economic activities' beginning with savings, credit and micro-enterprises. There again they adhere to the Teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha advised His followers to use only one-fourth of their earnings for household expenses. Two-fourths He advised us to invest, and to save the other one-fourth to use in case of an emergency need. Sarvodaya communities practice these principles and have built hundreds of non-violent economic enterprises in this manner.

In the Noble Eight-fold Path, the fifth step that the Buddha emphasized was 'right livelihood.' In our culture, we never speak of employment or the creation of a full employment society. We always talk about right livelihood or a full engagement society. 'wrong livelihood' can be described as earning money or making profits by killing animals, producing and selling weapons of destruction, use of poisons and alcoholic substances, exploitation of labor (especially of women and children), prostitution and any other socially harmful industry or trade.

The fifth stage is 'village self-governance' (grama swarajya). This is an alternative to existing power and party politics; it is the creation of a new democratic system of people's participatory governance. The failure of governments and the United Nations

to prevent war, terrorism, genocides, production of nuclear and other lethal weapons, large scale corruption, ecological and environmental hazards and the failure to eliminate poverty should open the eyes of all of us to the reality that a dependently originating vicious global system is in operation. We have to take every possible action without delay to reverse this cycle. This community awakening exercise is Sarvodaya's contribution to the national and global society. This exercise shows that it is possible to achieve a reversal of the vicious cycle if we learn from the lessons taught by the Buddha and implement intelligently designed programs.

This concept and practice of community organization and community awakening has been introduced to nearly 15,000 village communities in Sri Lanka. Out of these village communities, over 5,000 are trying out the economic programs and 3,000 are attempting to build self-governing villages. These efforts have been achieved without any formal governmental recognition or support, but instead within the prevailing space for freedom to gather, discuss, organize, meditate and act. However, with the application of communication technology, we should one day be able to link up all such attempts horizontally towards building national and global community networks where both personal violence and structural violence can be countered and reduced to a minimal and a manageable level.

Peace meditational walks and mass peace meditations

When communities are organized as briefly described above, they can be brought together in large numbers to have a national impact through non-violence and peace. We employ two main methods to achieve this objective, namely, peace meditational walks and mass peace meditations. There are two main objectives of both these exercises. The first objective is for participants to practice certain forms of mindfulness and mental concentration to generate spiritual energies that lie latent within all of us. The second objective is to try to build these spiritual energies into a critical mass of spiritual consciousness. It is our conviction that such a critical mass of spiritual or peace consciousness will have an impact on others who are not participants and also on those who are engaged in

violent conflicts.

We started these Buddha Dhamma-inspired peace activities when our country entered into a period of communal violence in 1983. Since that time, we have organized many such programs where we have openly faced violence with non-violence. Those individuals who believed in violence were victims of four evils, or satara agathi. On the other hand, we who believed in non-violence resorted to four sublime virtues satarabrahma viharana and four forms of social conduct satara sangrha vastu, which were described above. The leadership and organizational responsibilities of all these peace programs are entrusted to a special Sarvodaya entity called Shanthi Sena or the Sarvodaya Peace Brigade.

All those who participate in these peace activities are given a training and orientation in both peace walks and peace meditations. The training that we give is a peace education program based on Buddha's teachings but open to all, including non-Buddhists. All our peace programs are inter-faith and non-sectarian. We have gathered ourselves in thousands in very risky violent circumstances and performed publicly our peace walks and peace meditation programs. At all times, we have conditioned our minds to concentrate on our mind and body and to develop loving kindness for all even when at times we were harassed and attacked. In the end, non-violence triumphed. In order to give you a better understanding of how we train individuals to condition their minds and make peace within themselves, I will give examples of the kind of meditations we practiced that were suited to different occasions.

Some remarks on meditational practices

Most human beings who are chasing after material pursuits are releasing negative mental energies rooted in greed, ill will and ignorance. Every day, people add to the already existing mental pollutions in what is already in existence in the psycho sphere. This is just like how when pure air mixes with impure air the pure air gets polluted or when unpolluted water mixes with polluted water unpolluted water also gets polluted. The human mind too at present is getting more polluted daily due to

man's pattern of thinking and craving resulting in war, violence and disharmony. We as a world community can join together and reverse this order. We need to spend our life with right mindfulness in order to reject harmful thoughts.

There are three forms of meditation we use in our programs. One is meditation on mindful breathing (anapanasathi). The second is insight meditation (vipassana). The third is meditation on loving-kindness (metta). Without bothering the reader with technical terms and details, I will guide the reader through these meditational forms.

Mindful breathing meditation (anapanasathi bhavana)

All our peace meditation methods are based on observation of the inhaling and exhaling of the breath and being mindful of this fact alone. The best posture for meditation is sitting straight up. Sit on the ground cross-legged keeping your spine and head straight. If this is difficult, sit in any other comfortable position with the back and head straight. Lightly close your eyes. Keep your right hand facing up on your left palm. Have a slight smile on your lips. Direct your attention towards inhaling and exhaling. Keep your mind on a spot above your upper lip and inside the nostrils from where the inhaling and exhaling air could be mindfully observed. Our only concern at this moment is the air that is coming in and going out. Concentrate on this process only. You have to allow the natural process to take place. We can mindfully watch the in and out breath that is natural. Thus, we watch this process with our mind's eye. We observe how short breath, long breath, breathing in and out through both nostrils, breathing in and out through one nostril, rough breath, soft breath, naturally take place. We watch these with mindfulness. We continue until we almost do not feel the in and out breath and the mind is totally silenced.

Our only effort should be to keep our attention on the breath. If the mind runs away to any of the images, sounds, tastes, smells, or feelings look at all of them as impermanent, painful and egoless and come back to your breathing. Do not allow your mind to run to your past experiences or future expectations. Be mindful only of the present. Have in mind the attention on the

breath only.

It is possible that the spine will bend and the head will droop forward as a result of feeling drowsy whilst being seated. If it is not possible for you to control the drowsiness, direct your attention at the entire body and pick yourself up mindfully. Stand straight. Keep your hands together in front. You can watch your breath in this position. This is standing meditation.

Meditation can be continued while seated, standing, walking or lying down. In walking meditation, direct your eyes towards the nose and keep the eyes open to see the required distance only. On no condition should you look around. As much as you concentrate on your breath in walking meditation, your attention should be directed at inhalation and exhalation.

In addition to watching your breath, you should look at your hands and feet in walking meditation. Concentrate on how your mind tells you to lift the right foot, push it forward, put the right foot on the ground and walk forward; how the left foot is raised and how it is placed on ground should be mindfully observed as well.

Sometimes the peace meditation walkers go through areas where there is a lot of violence. But, they walk through the area only looking a very short distance straight ahead. They do not look at either side, nor do they observe people who may be watching them. A peace meditation leader is trained to completely ignore the outside world, but if their attention goes to anyone watching them, they will just extend loving kindness to them and then revert back towards observing their breath or their thoughts. The goal of walking peace meditation is to completely break away from the prevailing disturbed psycho sphere in the area and instead be a part of the harmonious psycho sphere that is sometimes created by over 100,000 peace walkers. The absolute silence itself that this many peace meditation walkers create has a tremendous impact on the entire locality.

Lying flat is another posture. We can keep the mind still in this

posture and watch our breath; while watching the breath we can observe our entire body. But, you must limit the lying flat meditation to a few minutes only or else you will fall asleep.

Develop the mindfulness of concentrating on the breath by adopting any one of the above postures. The best posture is sitting cross-legged on the ground and in Mass Peace Meditations this is the normal posture we adopt.

Insight meditation (vipassana)

After developing mindfulness of breath, our next effort should be to understand the true nature of our mind and body. After the concentration on our breath, this is the second of the meditation techniques.

This second kind of meditation is an effort to understand the mind and body or the name and form. This technique enables us to get rid of the feeling of the difference between individual's self and other beings. In other words, this effort is directed at overcoming the hitherto accepted belief of 'I/mine,' as a separate entity from others.

To start the meditation, be mindful of your breath for the first few minutes. Concentrate on the air you breathe as it travels to each cell in your body, not visible to the naked eye. Also concentrate on the fact that air thus taken in is exhaled through the nostrils. This is momentary. There is nothing you can call 'mine' in this process. Only in that moment, air is retained in the body.

Along with air, warmth (fire element) also enters our body. Wherever the air travels, heat accompanies it. Instantaneously, this heat and air leave your body and they are again replaced. There is nothing you can hold on to retain the heat. Concentrate on the fact that all living and non-living matter of nature is connected physically to our bodies, which we consider as ours, in the form of air and heat.

Make an effort to understand that you are an inseparable part of nature and all living and non-living matter is connected to

you.

When we look at our bodies while being conscious of our breath, our mind touches on the fluids of the body such as sweat, tears, blood, urine, phlegm etc., that are inside our body. Like air and heat, these fluids cannot be identified as beings, individuals, female, male, living, non-living, etc. But, they are common elements in nature. Concentrate on this factor. Understand that like the nature of air and heat, fluid too is a part of the universe yet found in your body as well.

Fourthly, our mind is directed towards the fourth element, which is hardness. Hair, finger and toenails, teeth, skin, flesh, bone, etc. cannot be called a person. There are twenty such parts that cannot be called me or mine. In this, hardness (earth factor) or softness, fluids (water), flow and have a sticky composition. Heat (fire) and cold and air that travel all over our body are present this moment and are replaced the next moment. If one part of these elements becomes weak, functioning of our body becomes weak. These four elements in space make up our body. Concentrate on this fact. There is nothing that can be called me and mine. From this meditation, you will realize that the food taken in becomes excreta and the very soft liquid seeping off the digested food helped to make the hard bones as well as the very delicate parts of our human body.

If the water factor is separated from the earth factor, then the result is dust. The earth factor keeps the body bound together whilst the air factor makes the body function. Although the elements keep the body together, they have no way of knowing this factor. If heat (fire) is not there, the body will rot. Nature has made it so that these elements keep the body together.

The entire preceding meditational exercise is a part of insight meditation or vipassana, which is named mindfulness of the body (kayanupassana). The next stage of vipassanameditation is mindfulness of feelings (vedananupassana)

Meditate on your breath for a few minutes. After that, concentrate on the elements of earth, heat, water and air.

Meditate for a few more minutes, and then concentrate on the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and the body, which are the five sensory organs.

Our mind feels that light from outside is touching the eyes. There is contact and sensation. Some of these miss our attention whilst others we perceive. Some of these we like. Some others we dislike. There are yet others that are not liked nor disliked. It is possible that we become attached to what we like and reject what we don't like.

We then direct our minds towards what touches our eyes and recognize the attachments and rejections. Sometimes a bygone event will flash before us and there might arise wholesome or unwholesome thoughts in us. We recall that as a result of such thoughts, we have either done good or bad, creative or destructive action. This too we understand. We then see how sensory contacts, sensations, perceptions, volitions and consciousness arise in us faster than lightning and we observe a stream of consciousness flowing in us.

Understand how a sound that falls in our ear instantaneously combines with the consciousness. In the same manner, taste to the tongue, smell to the nose, and feeling to the body gets added to the consciousness. Concentrate on how different sorts of memories are lodged and nurtured in or our consciousness. Then pay attention to the fact that we should weaken the process of impressions of the five senses getting lodged into our consciousness. Now we are able to control our mind from running amok.

We have been looking at the nature of our mind and body materially, but now we realize that we are able to observe these as they truly are. We are able to watch the delicate nature of our mind body and feeling. Then, it will start dawning in us that the mixture of the earth, fire, water, air, the impressions of the five senses, and also the momentary arising and vanishing of sensory contact, sensations, perceptions, volition and consciousness, are all present in a single moment. This understanding comes when we mindfully watch the objects of

contact of the five senses whilst we concentrate on our breath.

You may realize that progressively we are trying to inculcate in our consciousness the three factors of impermanence, suffering and delusion. This spiritual awakening makes us immune to fear outside ourselves and gather unbelievable energy to make any sacrifice necessary to make peace. In formal meditation terminology, what we are practicing may be given different names such as samatha and vipassana about which we need not bother. But I will only mention two other steps of vipassana meditation namely, observing thoughts (cittanupassana) and observing the laws behind these processes (dhammanupassana).

Loving kindness meditation (metta)

Keep your concentration on the breath. Pay attention to each and every element of your body. Concentrate on the arising and vanishing of these in a moment. Understand that there is nothing 'I', 'me' and 'mine' in these. Understand through realization that this nature is common to all living matter and that all living matter is interconnected.

Understand the nature of the mind; that it too is connected to all living matter. Also realize the cause and effect factor, the impermanent nature of things and that having attachments only brings misery.

Pay attention to the entire living world and watch how your mind undergoes purification and how it is reinforced with wholesome thoughts. Pay attention to how such thoughts arise and how unwholesome thoughts leave the mind and also how the entry of unwholesome thoughts is stopped. Let your mind be filled with altruistic joy.

Now your mind is full of compassionate thoughts. You will observe the gradual weakening of the differences that existed between you and others and your egoistic nature will subside. To your joy, you will realize that the entire living world is becoming closer to your heart. You feel the relief of a great burden that you have been carrying taken off your mind. Your mind is filled

with compassion to everyone, persons close to you, persons you know, people whom you like or dislike, the entire mankind and also to the beings of other spheres of existence.

Such compassionate thoughts that flow from your heart are capable of radiating in all directions. Extend them to the past, present and the future. The rays of light generated through your kindness touch everybody like the sun's rays.

May peace prevail in you always. May your family members be happy and well in their mind and body. May your friends be well and happy. May the people known to you, unknown to you, friend and foe alike be contented and peaceful. May your positive energies generated through compassion help convert persons with violence and hatred in their beings to peaceful and compassionate beings. May peace replace war. Make use of the positive energies you generated through your meditation in the direction of creating a more peaceful world. May there be peace in your self, in all of us, in our society, and in the environment. With this thought conclude your meditation.

I will conclude this chapter with another saying of the Buddha from the Dhammapada (Ven Narada's Translation from Pali).

Akkodena Jine Kodham

Conquer Anger by Love

Asadhum Sadhuna Jine

Conquer Evil by Good

Jine Kadariyam Danena

Conquer the Stingy by Giving

Saccena Alikavadinam

Conquer the Liar by Truth

Reference:

United Nations Department of Public Information. (2010, June). United Nations Global Compact annual review – Anniversary edition. Available at: http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/news_events/8.1/UNGC_Annual_Review_2010.pdf.

**Acceptance Speech on the
Conferring of Basava Sree Award**

Ceremony held at Sri Muruga Math

Chitradurga, Karnataka, India
August 15th, 2011

At the outset of my acceptance speech, I wish to express my very sincere thanks to Swamiji Dr. Shivamurthy Murugha Sharanaru and his selection committee for selecting me to confer this prestigious Basava Sree Award for 2011. I most humbly accept this award on behalf of several million people in Sri Lanka who labored with me and my wife (Neetha Dhammachari also present here) for the last 53 years under the banner of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, a Movement to awaken all through sharing.

I consider it a singular honor to receive this award in the presence of our most respected H.E. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalamji, former President of India. Additionally, I am honored that former Union Minister and my life-long friend Sri M.V. Rajashekarani, and many other dignitaries are also present at this ceremony. Last but not least, it is an extremely memorable moment in my life to have this opportunity to speak a few words in the presence of Dr. Shivamurthy Murugha Sharanaru Swamiji and several thousand Sharanas who keep alive the life and mission of Sri Basaveshwara and Sharane Akkamahadevi.

I am delighted today to join the company of an array of great social workers, reformists and peaceful revolutionaries who received the Basava Sree Award before me. Among them are several personalities who are closely known to me such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dr. Kiran Bedi, Dr. Vandana Shiva, Sri Anna Hazare and Swami Agnivesh, all of whom have been great sources of inspiration for my work. At this auspicious occasion, I remember all of them and wish them continued success in their respective humanitarian missions.

I must confess that when I read the material that Swamiji had sent me about Shri Murugharajendra Jagadguru Mutt, I felt that the Mutt has much relevance both in its historical and spiritual context as well as in current socio-economic applications to what we are doing in Sri Lanka. We at Sarvodaya are doing exactly the same to transform our society by applying peaceful, constructive and non-violent revolutionary methods and techniques.

Just like Shri Jagathguru Murugharajendra Mutt, we in Sarvodaya treat all life with respect, extend compassion towards all living beings, treat all human beings with equality and fraternity, awaken human personalities, families and village communities for self-governance, work towards building a self-sufficient no-poverty economy, take care of the environment, safeguard the ecology and extend all possible services to the needy. We are empowering the poor and powerless people at the very bottom of our society. We are helping the poor and powerless to awaken their consciousness, develop their full potential and build institutions and self-development structures from the bottom-up.

I would like to take this opportunity to describe in a little more detail how we at Sarvodaya are building a better existence for the Sri Lankan people by working toward the same goal as Shri Basavanna and the other Sharanas, the goal being to build a truly spiritually awakened society.

On this day, at the present time, do you understand why there are riots in London, people in Somalia dying due to drought, thousands of Chinese becoming victims of floods, Japanese in Fukushima facing nuclear fallouts and death, Libyans dividing into two factions and killing one another and many more tragic incidents? All of this evil is happening in a world where we are boasting of democracy, good governance, unprecedented economic growth and amazing discoveries and inventions in the field science and technology. Undoubtedly, something has radically gone wrong in our human psyche, our human consciousness and our socio-economic and political arrangements for all of this evil to occur.

In our Buddhist literature we come across five cosmic laws, pancha niyama dharma, which operate above all man made laws. If we act in violation of these laws as we do now, we have to face the consequences such as earthquakes, tsunamis, tidal waves, tornados, floods, droughts, famines, civil unrest, bloodshed, incurable diseases, wars and such other disasters. What are these niyama dharma? First, bija niyama are the natural laws that pertain to genes or our genetic formations.

Second, *utu niyama* are the laws governing seasons and climates. Third, *kamma niyama* are the laws of causality. Fourth, *chitta niyama* are the effects of volitions on the psycho sphere and fifth, *dhamma niyama* are the cosmic laws pertaining to all phenomena. Together these five *niyāma dharmas* determine the wellness of our environmental and ecological state and the ability of plants, humans and other living beings to survive on our planet, the mental health or sanity prevailing in our societies in order for us to live together in peace and harmony, and shared spiritual goals that give a meaning and purpose for human existence.

The problem is that the modern world is dominated by materialistic values that always promote greed, aversions and ignorance and disrupt the *niyama dharmas*. We are immersed in a global dark cloud of ignorance that is bringing about the large-scale social unrest, deprivation, and the natural and man-made disasters I mentioned earlier. Globalization has led to a concentration of wealth in the hands of high-income elite around the world and this has spread materialist values through society. This has led to multiple forms of organized violence that have been instituted by both the elite in the name of improving society and also by terrorist groups who promise liberation.

As you know, the result has been the opposite of the positive framing and positive connotations that come with the mainstream rhetoric of 'development' and modernization. The rosy concept that the international system paints of an improved society has in fact led to extreme amounts of destruction instituted by states, a decrease in democratic governance worldwide, negative effects on food security and ecological sustainability, marginalization and exploitation of women and minority groups, breeding of fundamentalism and promotion of terrorism, just to name a few of the negative results. Also, many 'improvement' efforts just end up usurping rights and resources of indigenous communities by private business interests for capitalist profit and not for the overall benefit and improvement of the world's poor.

While I admit that lot of governments, intergovernmental

organizations and UN bodies are doing good things to combat this injustice, the global challenges are too big for their generally non-spiritual, highly conditioned, and egoistic minds to handle. Therefore, personally I do not believe that much can be expected from them as they are committed to increased production and increased consumption, economic growth, global markets and modernization. The modern economic and political systems are not based on any spiritual principles. As I stated earlier, they make the best out of human weaknesses such as greed, hatred and ignorance. So, they do not believe in the three principles of anicca (change), dukkha (suffering) and anatta (egolessness) that Buddha has shown to us as the three unavoidable conditions we possess. They rather believe in nicca (permanence), sukha (lasting comforts) and atta (egoism). In spite of the vast danda shakthi (power to punish) and dhana shakthi (power of wealth) that these macro organizations have, they lack dharma shakthi (strength of the dharma) and jana shakthi (strength of the people), which alone can bring about a significant change for the better.

We at Sarvodaya believe that true cleansing of society can be realized through putting into practice the strength of the dharma and the strength of the people. In more practical terms, we who are spiritually motivated to serve our communities have to base our work on rural and urban communities that can be educated to build their social, economic and political structures on a foundation of their traditional, spiritual, moral and cultural values. It was this kind of initiative that your founder took when he organized his movement 900 years ago and is now being continued by the Sri Jagadguru Murugharajendra Mutt. As his holiness Dr. Sri Shivamurthy Murughanarendra Sharanaru knows, even today, this spiritual approach to cleansing society is the safest and surest path we can take to tackle global problems, however insignificant our efforts may appear to the decision makers of macro organizations and centralized political authorities.

The Sarvodaya Movement was inspired by the teachings of the Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent struggles, examples set by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Sri Jayaprakash Narayan and

many other Sri Lankan, Indian and world leaders. These leaders believed in spiritual values and tried to apply them to change the social, economic and political life of people for more freedom, equality and peace. Practicing the spiritual values taught by the above leaders is extremely difficult. While billions are invested for political and business promotion and propaganda to condition gullible people's minds for the advantage of those who seek and keep power and wealth, hardly one cent is spent for the promotion of cleansing of people's minds of lobha (greed), dosa (aversions), and moha (ignorance). It is easy to invest in greed, promote aversions and exploit ignorance. But, investing in the development of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity is not as easy. This difficult task is what you from here and we from there are doing.

Sarvodaya works to get individuals and communities to invest in beneficence. This investment occurs through working together shoulder to shoulder with common people on the basis of loving-kindness and sharing instead of on the basis of greed, cutthroat competition and egocentricity. We at Sarvodaya believe that this spiritual focus on the cleansing of the mind will influence higher echelons of our society.

The Movement strives to build spirituality in the truest Buddhist sense in order to eliminate both desire and suffering. It follows a bottom-up approach to development by putting the individuals in the driving seat and giving individuals responsibility for improving their own lives. Sarvodaya believes that a focus on spiritual values can lead to a transformation of personality and empower the Sri Lankan people to take control of their lives and 'wake up together' to rise above the desire and suffering and follow the middle path towards a healthy, no-poverty, no-affluence society.

The Sarvodaya integrated infrastructure awakens people and cleanses people's minds of lobha (greed), dosa (aversions), and moha (ignorance). This infrastructure building takes place through our large Sarvodaya family of work units, independent organizations and income-generating projects. The Sarvodaya family builds this infrastructure through peace marches and

meditations, pre-schools, refugee camps, village societies, microcredit programs, women's empowerment programs, educational exchanges between youth of different ethnic backgrounds, nutrition centers, orphanages, re-integration programs in post-conflict areas, legal services, educational programming and the training of youth in peace work.

Membership in the Movement adds up to more than any single Sri Lankan political party. There are fourteen national level independent units affiliated with Sarvodaya that support about 15,000 village societies across Sri Lanka. In every district and sub-district, Sarvodaya has a development education and development coordination center that serves the above villages. About 5,300 of these village societies are registered as independent legal units. They organize savings, credit, entrepreneurship, and micro-enterprise programs. Many already have or have the aim of building their own village bank. There are also twelve Sarvodaya development educational institutes that are linked to the Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning.

The most recent development is the organization of Deshodaya Councils (National Awakening Councils) at divisional, district and national levels. There are 300 Deshodaya Mandals formed of elected members from 3,000 village-level grama swaraja (village awakening) committees. These in turn delegate 1,000 elected members to attend a monthly National Deshodaya Sabha (assembly) meeting that each time lasts for three days and is held in different districts. The members take a pledge to work voluntarily on a thirty-point program to transform the consciousness, the economy and power relationships in the country without dabbling in power and party politics. They pledge to strive nonviolently to build a Sarvodaya social order where village self-governing units are the foundation of good governance. We already have 140,000 youth in our Shanthi Sena (peace brigade) Movement and we are in the process of enrolling 100,000 National Deshodaya Sabha members.

I have spent fifty-three years of my life with my colleagues building up the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and traveling around

the world to promote the Sarvodaya message in philosophy and praxis. After eighty years of living, it is refreshing to join my brothers and sisters here in India who do the same work at their 200 religious institutions, 125 educational institutions and many orphanages and social programs. Together we can continue to spread a balanced vision where all people can meet their basic needs and build a future where no one is excluded from a compassionate development process. On this historic day of India's independence, let us resolve to join together selflessly to become new human beings and build a new world society which works for all, man, animal and plant. Let us resolve to live in peace with ourselves, our human society and nature.

Thank you again for the award and for the gentle hospitality and affection you bestowed upon us. I wish all of you good health, long lives and a dispassionate joy of living. Finally, as Buddha said,

Devo vassatu kalena

May there be seasonal rains

Sassa sampatti hotuca

May there be agricultural prosperity

Peetho bhavatu lokoca

May there be mental joy in all

Raja bhavatu dhammiko

May the rulers be righteous

**Natural Disasters and Religion -
In Search of an Alternative Way of Life**

Symposium at Zojoji Temple

Tokyo, Japan
October 10th, 2011

It is a great privilege to be with you this morning. I wish to thank the organizing committee, especially Rev. Hiroshi Jin, for the kindness to have me here to deliver a talk on 'Natural Disasters and Religion – In Search of an Alternative Way of Life'.

I am sure all of you are aware that I have come to Japan this time at the invitation of Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai (BDK) of Japan as they have graciously selected me to receive the 45th Cultural Award for the Promotion of Buddhism. The award ceremony, which was to be held on the 17th of March 2011, was postponed to the 12th of October 2011 due to the unfortunate triple tragedy that Japanese people faced, namely, the earthquake, the tsunami and the nuclear accident.

We were with you in spirit at that time, but were only able to conduct religious activities to give you strength to face this situation and participate in meritorious activities in the name of the victims and the deceased. We were helpless to be of any concrete physical assistance because of the great distance that separates us.

The theme you have selected for this symposium, 'natural disasters and religion', is very timely and appropriate. So is the sub-theme, 'in search of an alternative way of life', which is closely linked to what we call natural disasters.

I was born into a Buddhist family. My parents and other elders in the family were very devoted and practicing Buddhists. My home was next to our temple. I had the good fortune of associating with and learning from very learned and disciplined Buddhist monks from the time of my infancy. I received my primary, secondary and higher education mostly in Buddhist schools, colleges and universities. When I started teaching, I spent most of my teaching days in a premier Buddhist college known as Nalanda. The now internationally famous Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement started there at Nalanda fifty-three years ago as an experiment. It was an experiment in building a society that works for all based on the Teachings of the Buddha.

Whatever I say at this symposium will be based on five decades

of experience in translating Buddha's teaching into development action and five decades of attempting to restructure over 15,000 village communities in Sri Lanka. At the start, our objective was to develop a self-governing community model that integrates spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political life of rural communities. We call it gram swaraj or a self-governing community, and this remains our objective today.

I will begin my comments on the theme 'natural disasters and religion' in the light of the Buddha Dhamma as I understand it. Why did the Bodhisattva struggle through innumerable cycles of births and deaths? It was to find a way to end the suffering that all beings are subject to in the sansaric cycle. The Bodhisattva discovered the four noble truths, namely, the noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the cause of suffering, the noble truth of cessation of suffering and the noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering (dukkha, samudaya, nirodha and magga). So, disaster in whatever form is caused by and is a part of this suffering. It cannot be prevented as long as we wander in the sansaric ocean. The only way to end all suffering is by attaining the supreme bliss of nirvana.

However, if we follow the Buddha's teachings in our day-to-day life with the ultimate goal of attaining Nirvana through living a life founded on sila (morality), samadhi (concentration) and panna (wisdom), it is my strong conviction that as individuals we can escape from becoming victims of any kind of disaster. We learn in Buddhist teachings the principle known as dhammohave rakkhathidhammachari, which means 'those who conduct themselves according to the Dhamma will be protected by the Dhamma'. We often hear of certain people who miraculously escape disastrous situations when others faced with the same disastrous situations perish. These are instances where the law of karma has come into effect on those who have accumulated powerful meritorious or positive karma.

We come across five cosmic laws (pancha niyama dhammas) in Buddhist literature that function above all man-made laws. Kamma niyama or the law of karma is just one of these laws. There are others known as bija niyama, the cosmic laws

pertaining to our genes or genetic formations, *utu niyama*, the cosmic laws governing seasons and climates. Others *arecitta niyama*, the cosmic laws determining the effects of volitions on the psycho-sphere as a whole, and *dhamma niyama*, the cosmic laws that control everything else pertaining to our conduct toward one another, relationships with other living beings and the natural world itself. When one goes into deep contemplation on these five natural laws, one wonders whether most of what goes under the label of 'natural disaster' is really caused by the misconduct of nature. Perhaps it is caused rather by man's misbehavior, endless greed, aversions and ignorance.

Some educated people are of the view that religion is a personal matter and it should not be mixed up with social, economic or political matters. As a Buddhist, I cannot accept this view. On the contrary, I am totally opposed to this narrow perception of religion.

In the noble eightfold path, the Buddha advised us of the importance of cultivating right views (*samma ditti*), right thoughts (*samma sankappa*), right words (*samma vaca*), right actions (*samma kammanta*), right livelihood (*samma ajiva*), right effort (*samma vayama*), right mindfulness (*samma sati*), and right concentration (*samma samadhi*). It is quite clear to me that an individual has to simultaneously follow these in all sectors of life for total self-realization. A Buddhist cannot live a dual life or have a split personality.

Both an individual's personal life and public life should work in total harmony so that non-greed, non-aversions and non-egoism is developed through thoughts, words and actions. When we think of cultivating right views, Buddha's basic teachings of *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering or unsatisfactoriness) and *anatta* (non-ego) come to mind. We can always see that human lives are motivated by the false views of *nicca* (permanence), *sukha* (comfort) and *atta* (ego). The entire human society seems to be absorbed in this ignorance of reality. People foolishly try to build their egos and live only for a seemingly permanent and affluent lifestyle. Hence, when disasters occur, these disasters seem as if they are just totally

unexpected incidents that interfere with life.

I mentioned earlier that some of the unfortunate disasters like earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, floods, droughts, lightening, etc., that we attribute to nature are perhaps not created by nature, but instead by man himself. When human beings violate the pancca niyama dharmas, the dynamic stability of the earth and her related fields of the oceans, the atmosphere, the stratosphere, etc., are also affected adversely.

There are numerous jatakastories about how societies lived in peace and harmony and prospered in a very friendly and healthy natural environment where rulers were righteous. When kings/rulers became evil in a nation, nature itself then rebelled against that nation by creating droughts, floods, earthquakes, civil commotions and other disasters, to include communicable and non-communicable diseases. This teaches us that in order to have good governance, kings and rulers need to follow the ten principles known as dasa raja dharmas. These include sharing or beneficence (dana), ethical conduct (sila), Recognition and promotion of talent and being charitable to the needy (pariccada), straightforwardness (ajjava), impartiality and composure (tapan), non-hatred (akrodha), non-violence (avihimsa), patience and forgiveness (kanthi), and non-revengefulness (avirodhitha). If we look at the present day rulers, how many of them are following the above principles of good governance? I do not think many are promoting the dasa raja dharmas.

What we call natural disasters are, therefore, largely man-made. It seems very logical that natural disasters have a relationship with the conduct of humans toward their own kind, toward other creatures in nature, and finally towards mother earth. Disasters in the form of floods, desertification, earth slides, climate change, global warming, melting of icebergs at the poles, nuclear accidents, famines and many communicable and non-communicable diseases such as AIDS, bloody conflicts, violent crimes and wars are certainly caused by spiritual degeneration of human society.

At this point I must explain my views about religions and spirituality. We have in our world a large number of organized religions that people profess. Some of these religions have degenerated themselves like most other secular organizations and now they promote divisions among human beings and even giving rise to religious wars. If religions are really to be of service to human kind, then they should lead their followers on a path of reduction of their greed for material wealth. They should also lead their followers on a path toward non-craving of power or recognition, should help followers avoid their aversions towards other religions, races or communities and should always help their followers on a path of overcoming their egocentricity. In other words, religions should work as a means to spiritual awakening of humanity.

Let us face the true reality of our present way of life. As individuals, most of us want to achieve a lifestyle with maximum gratification of our five senses. Over the past five years, the U.S.A., the U.K. and other European countries set a poor example by placing value and importance on material progress and not on spiritual development. Japan and other eastern countries also followed this path. While we continued to have our religions by name with rituals and outer paraphernalia, we lost the spiritual content of religious teachings.

The two most important organs of society, namely, political and economic structures, have completely distanced themselves from religious principles. Social institutions, particularly those related to education, have also gradually dropped spiritual teachings, the very teachings that are now treated as the most essential component for developing human personalities and also for maintaining justice and peace in society. Even humanitarian disciplines, such as the discipline of health, have fallen into a materialistic framework that has completely destroyed thousands of years of indigenous knowledge in healing systems. Systems of agriculture, irrigation, environmental protection, ecological stability and protection/use of safe and sustainable energy sources have also fallen into this materialistic framework.

We are going through crisis after crisis today in all of these fields. I am not saying that we should go back in time and return to where humanity was five centuries ago. But, certainly we can have a fresh look at our present problems and see these problems as extending beyond economic indicators and the state of stock markets. We can start to think anew and take corrective action.

We are living in the first year of the second decade of the 21st century. We have committed many blunders in every field of human activity up to this point. We have to now come to a decisive point and decide whether we are going to bring about a destruction of our own societies and other nations with this self-centered approach, or whether we are going to survive as a human species by being non-selfish.

The Buddha taught us that there are three factors that cause and are at the root of all of our personal, national and global problems. The first is greed, the second is hatred and the third is ignorance or delusion. These three evils within our own minds have become so well organized that they bring about all the man-made and even the natural disasters we are facing at this time. Unless we can begin again by enlightening ourselves to the causes that have brought our human civilization to this critical stage, namely, greed, ill-will and ignorance, we can never hope to be a sustainable and peaceful global society. But why are we subjected to these three evils? It is because we have forgotten to realize the existence of the three fundamental laws of nature; namely, the law of impermanence (anicca), the law of suffering (dukkha) and the law of non-ego (anatta).

At the present time, Japan is working to resolve the problems caused by the tragedy that took place a few months ago. I think that this period of time should be used for an entire re-evaluation of Japan from the post-second world war period up to the time when this triple tragedy took place. The government and people of Japan should not be the only parties to reflect, but all governments and global citizens should also take a step back and take a hard look at the past six decades. The people and the governments should try to understand not just the

successes that have been achieved, but they should also reflect on and critically evaluate the failures that have brought about the present global crisis.

If we look back on the period before western expansion and the dawn of the industrial age, we find that in spite of all kinds of armed conflicts within and between nations, our societies still remained and were sustained on community organization and peaceful, mutually cooperative lifestyles. We paid great importance to personal spiritual awakening. External improvements made lives more comfortable, but even when making these kinds of improvements, we still we paid great importance to personal spiritual awakening by following principles of our religions. In our part of the world, teachings of the Buddha have influenced our civilizations one after another. Even in spite of all the scientific and technological revolutions that have taken place, Buddha's teachings remain even today like a beacon light to dispel the ignorance we have created.

Many scholars point out that the present global crisis is the result of a spiritual and moral decline of the human community. Hence, a transformation of the human consciousness should be brought about initially, and this should be followed by economic and political transformation.

We are helping the poor and powerless awaken their consciousness, develop their full potential and build institutions and self-development structures. Sarvodaya aims at encouraging individuals and communities to invest in beneficence. We believe in people's power, supported by the strength of dharma. People are trained in this dharmato ensure that they act with clarity of purpose and are mindful of the difficulties that people and the natural environment face. But, our approach does not offer a mono-cultural formula for all the ills in other parts of the world. On the other hand, the followers of our approach have released an integrated and culturally appropriate series of processes in the above manner through hard work. In each Sarvodaya village, the local people themselves decide on and implement a simple village development plan that is based on principles of self-reliance and community participation.

Activities are planned and implemented by and for villagers, pre-school children, school going children, youth, mothers, farmers and other adults. A village level Sarvodaya Shramadana Society is organized in due course and becomes legally registered with the government. These societies thus have opportunities to engage themselves in economic activities that benefit the village people. The innovative and non-violent power of the people as a whole creates a kind of positive energy that improves the quality of life in the villages, and this energy is strengthened by the process of working together in a variety of fields that affect the village life.

For the Sarvodaya societies and this development model to meet basic needs at the village level, a variety of trained personnel such as pre-school workers, healthcare workers, nutrition workers, community shop keepers, savings and credit organizers, rural technical service workers, agricultural promoters and so on are needed. The workers are trained at the divisional level, the district level and the national level development educational centers.

A struggle between violence and non-violence now occurs at all corners of the globe. Sarvodaya does not believe in violence or terror. It believes in the building of a critical mass of peace consciousness and the cultivation of non-violent and just attitudes within and between nations. To achieve this we must work in the three inter-related sectors of consciousness, economics and power. Transformation of consciousness is a spiritual process while transformation of the economy is a development exercise and transformation of power structures is a political and constitutional matter. In all three sectors we are working to build a critical mass of transformation.

We help the villagers to move through psychological, social, legal and economic infrastructure building phases in addition to a political self-governance phase. All of these phases begin at the village level and are based on an alternative life style that stresses simplicity and need-based local economies. Greed-based economic pursuits are discouraged. The use of less energy and organic agriculture, the protection of the natural fertility

of the soil, the conservation and protection of natural water sources, and the provision of care toward the environment comprise this new way of life promoted by Sarvodaya.

When a community of people is thus organized, they can become a part of the solution to national and global problems. We first begin with ourselves, to understand our own personality awakening; from infancy, childhood, youth, adulthood and old age up to the dying moment when we learn to breathe our last with right awareness. A human being who fails to understand the physical, mental, emotional, psychological and spiritual processes that his or her own personality is going through every moment will never find true happiness and the joy of living in this life. For all above stages of human development, we have scientifically developed practical programs from which thousands of people have recieved daily benefit. No man made divisions among human beings will interfere with these learning processes and hence the human consciousness will progressively revert back to its original pure form to realize the highest goal of human evolution – the realization of the truth that all living beings are interconnected and interdependent and that we should live for the well-being of all.

**Working for Peaceful
Co-existence and a Just World**

*Indian Academy of Social Sciences, Indian Social Science
Congress Inaugural Address*

Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, India
December 24th-31st 2011

Dr. T. Karunakaran, Hon. President of the Indian Academy of Social Sciences, distinguished academics, researchers, scholars, social activists, ladies and gentlemen, this is a memorable opportunity for me to express some of my thoughts about the contemporary problems we face before a very exclusive audience of social scientists of India. The venue itself brings to memory the greatest social scientist of our times, Mahatma Gandhi. It is also from Wardha that Gandhiji experimented with his theories in education, social and economic development and participatory politics. Being present here in and of itself brings me new inspiration to continue my Sarvodaya mission at home for many more years to come. Dr. Karunakaran, please accept my sincere thanks for inviting me to this congress.

The only reason that may have prompted the leaders of the Indian Social Science Academy to invite me to be the Guest of honor, I believe, is my association with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka. My association with this organization is from its inception. The organization is known for its worldwide reputation as an innovative attempt based on dharmashakthi (power of righteousness) and janashakthi (people's power) to transform our society from the grass root upwards. During the short time available I will certainly share with you many useful experiences from the last fifty years of our movement that are relevant to the theme of the congress. But, please don't take me as someone who came to teach you. Rather, I came to learn from you. My inspiration mainly came from the Buddha, Emperor Ashoka, Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Sri Jayaprakash Narayan, Prof. G. Ramachandran, Swami Vivekananda and Shri Krishnamoorthy, all of whom are great sons of India.

I am failing in my duty if I do not remember on this occasion late Professor Sugatha Das Gupta and Shri Tarlok Singh, both of whom visited Sri Lanka and gave their valuable advice for our work. The late Prof. Nandasena Ratnapala, the best known social scientist and research scholar of Sri Lanka, was my guide and colleague for almost 50 years and we owe him much for whatever theoretical contributions Sarvodaya has made to the social science field.

Let me now express my thoughts on the subject of 'working for peaceful co-existence and a just world'. In the context of the present world situation and the immense power the main actors in the political and economic arena wield over humanity and her planetary home, there is hardly any hope for peace, co-existence or justice, unless we can together bring about a radical transformation in the consciousness of the main actors; this would also include a radical transformation in the economic and political structures controlled by these main actors. Your theme and context section of the 35th Indian Social Science Congress correctly recognizes the existence of a deepening social, economic, ecological and political crisis in India and the world. Also, you clearly diagnoses the causes that brought about this dangerous situation that harms our planet as well as all of us sentient beings and non-sentient life forms. I need not repeat what you have mentioned in your context and theme descriptions; I whole heartedly agree.

However, I will quote from your context section one strong sentence that fascinated me and on which I think I should express my thoughts today. This quote is:

...neo-liberal theory based global capital appeared accelerating and intensifying the processes of enrichment of the few and impoverishment of the majority. The process of globalizing growth of the capital overthrew all the constitutional growth of people's sovereignty, democracy, socialism and secularism in the dustbin of history.

In the constitutions, or the supreme laws of our countries that we have adopted, it is stated that the sovereignty is with the people and is non-alienable. In the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, for example, Article 3 states that, "...sovereignty is in the people and is inalienable. Sovereignty includes the powers of government, fundamental rights and the franchise."

Although this inalienable sovereignty is given to the people under Article 3 of the Constitution, from Article 4 onward,

sovereignty is delegated or passed on to various bodies of elected representatives who are given the authority to exercise legislative, executive and judicial power. I presume the Indian situation may not be much different from ours.

I started involving myself in voluntary social work during my student days 64 years ago and I did this kind of work under the Sarvodaya banner for over fifty-three years. I am no constitutional lawyer or political scientist. Yet, with my decades of experience in grappling with socio-economic problems in my country, I can boldly state that in my honest opinion, elected representatives of the people have knowingly or unknowingly taken away the sovereignty of people to acquire and keep state power with themselves, their party and those related or loyal to them.

At the beginning, immediately following our independences, our inexperienced representatives may have blindly and innocently imitated their former western mentors. Perhaps they did this through ignorance of our own value-based systems of good governance and economic management that previously prevailed in our lands. Our representatives would not have realized at that time the long-term damage they were causing to our civilization. I do not think that politicians entrusted with the management of our temporarily-formed states were deliberately taking away the sovereignty of the people. But, once they and their near and dear ones tasted the worldly benefits of power, they naturally gave into the greed to enjoy seemingly eternal power and increasing wealth and fame. They used every despicable method; they raised caste, communal and religious issues to divide people and win their votes. Today, of course, it is not a secret that intimidation, buying votes, impersonation, violence and other illegal acts are common features we see during an election.

The state became synonymous with the government in the minds of the people. The people themselves forgot that sovereignty in reality belonged to them and not to those who were elected by them for a limited period of time. The government, which was run by these elected trustees, intruded into the state and

its constitution with necessary amendments from time to time. The elected trustees enacted parliamentary acts that enabled them to behave as the state's proprietors who could even hand over rights to whomsoever they wished.

At this stage I venture to state that it is not only the sovereignty of ordinary citizens that was lost. State officials, including those who belonged to the judiciary, armed services and police also lost their freedom and dignity to act according to the sovereignty under law that originated from the constitution. The state officials came under the control of politicians. This caused irreparable damage to the sacred institutions that were meant to work for the welfare of the people, maintain law and order and dispense justice impartially. That is not all. I will attribute the decadence of our educational systems, the destruction of our natural and poison-free agricultural and food production, the deforestation and the environmental and ecological hazards we see today to this power-oriented, party politics system. Sovereignty was permanently entrusted to this system.

My conclusion, as far as my country is concerned, is that the people's freedoms were taken away by representatives who left people the right to only exercise their vote once every few years. The citizens were reduced to voters and that is now their only role in governance. As you know, the party politics system presents voters with candidate choices and the voters nominate their choices to the legislative bodies. This is a system that breeds all forms of malpractice and crime, and promotes corruption, bribery and nepotism. This system is immoral, unclean, unjust and violent. There is no hope unless and until we, especially all of you who belong to the social science field, conduct research and place before the people the fact that the root of all social, economic and political injustices (including violation of fundamental rights pertaining to freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship and even inequalities), can be traced to the taking of the sovereignty of the people. You need to advocate for the people and help them innovate non-violent ways for remedial action.

Examples from both of our countries show that representative democracy does not work for the well-being of all people. It not only perpetrates the existing divisions in our societies, but it also makes these inequalities worse. In the political arena, party and power politics erodes people's participatory democracy and promotes hegemony and supremacy-mongering. It helps the economic system make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Even the judicial system has lost its credibility and respectability due to party politics. I consider the root cause of all of this to be representative democracy losing its capacity to be responsible to the people. We should now think of direct people's participatory democracy where we do not have to delegate our sovereignty to levels that are beyond our immediate reach.

There was a need to elect representatives to higher and higher councils including parliament in the past when communication systems were poor. Today, conditions are different. Within seconds we can communicate not only with our own people but also with anybody outside our country. Advanced communication technologies make it irrelevant to have the present systems of government that cannot deliver good governance to the people. These systems have outlived their usefulness. Let us get together and evolve a system of direct participatory democracy so that the enjoyment of sovereignty does not alienate anybody, but instead remains with the people. This will ensure transparency, justice and efficiency in all governing bodies.

I think time has come for us to give serious thought to Gandhiji's concept of village self-governance or Gram Swaraj. Sri Lanka is a small country and we at my Movement believe that the implementation of a direct people's participatory democracy is a possibility. Perhaps for India, a huge country with over a billion people, a different approach can realize the same goals. Whatever it is, a radical transformation of existing institutional structures is needed for our mere survival. While you in India have a flourishing economy and as a nation you claim to be a super power and produce a large number of billionaires every year, I am sure you are very concerned about the teeming millions of poor and other national problems that exist in your

country. We in Sri Lanka are also said to be a flourishing economy and we also do produce a few dozen billionaires every year under the existing super-capitalist system. The system caters to the needs (or greed?) of these billionaires and these individuals receive all the luxurious services they desire. But, my concern is firstly with the poor and powerless and then about the future of us all. Our target is Sarvodaya – to awaken all.

After fifty-three years of existence, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka just now launched what is called Deshodaya Movement. Deshodaya literally means ‘awakening of the nation’. We inaugurated the Deshodaya Movement in January 2010 immediately after the war ended. We had already carried out Purna Paurushodaya (total personality awakening), Kutumbodaya (total family awakening), Gramodaya (village awakening), and Nagarodaya (urban community awakening) programs before we embarked on our latest Deshodaya awakening program. Time constraints prevent me from describing all the above programs that gained ownership in Sri Lankan communities. So, I will confine myself only to the Deshodaya program which I consider to be most relevant to the theme of peace, co-existence and justice.

Sarvodaya itself has over 15,000 village and urban communities actively engaged in integrated self-development and community awakening programs. Out of these villages, 3,000 villages are working on a village/community self-governance or the Grama Swaraj program. Similarly, there are other civil sector organizations that are working in certain rural and urban communities without getting involved in party and power politics. We network our Sarvodaya societies with non-Sarvodaya societies into Deshodaya or National Awakening Councils at the divisional and district levels. So, in 25 districts and nearly in 300 divisions we have 300 elected Deshodaya Councils. From January 2010 onwards these Deshodaya Councils travel to a selected district every month and 1,000 representatives from all the 25 districts attend a three-day study and training program. On the third day of each program, the new Deshodaya Council members become members of the National Deshodaya Assembly and take a pledge to voluntarily

serve the society in three integrated sectors, namely, the transformation of consciousness, the transformation of the economy and the transformation of power.

To date, we have had 18 meetings of the Deshodaya National Assembly in 18 different districts around the country. Even though we exclude members of parliament and members of provincial councils from becoming formal members, we admit 50% of non-Sarvodaya members to the assembly and these new members may even come from political organizations. They agree to accept Deshodaya principles, especially the principles of non-violence and non-sectarianism in performing services. Our target is to recruit and train 100,000 volunteers to join the Deshodaya National Assembly. So far we have hit only 20% of our target. But, the Deshodaya members have already started implementing our thirty-point Deshodaya program to transform consciousness, economy and power in their own areas.

I will say that this is not a confrontational attempt to get rid of all those who wield unjustly political and economic power today, but instead a non-violent people's struggle to build a new civilization, based on our own indigenous and ancient value systems. We aim to replace the negative aspects of western industrial civilization that were thrust upon us. As Mahatma Gandhi pointed out to us over 100 years ago in his Hind Swaraj, all evils we are confronted with today are "intrinsic to industrialism" or modern civilization. Aping indiscriminately at this modernist illusion and consumerist madness is the cause for ecological and environmental crisis, hunger on one hand and chemically or otherwise poisoned food consumption that causes innumerable diseases on the other, increasing poverty and powerlessness in the common people while rich and the powerful increase their privileges, and a myriad of other global evils including climate change and defective nuclear reactors that release harmful radiation.

The new movement you are contemplating on 'Academic Social Responsibility' is an urgent need in our times. We cannot confine ourselves any longer to our intellectual pursuits in our lecture halls, to our research laboratories or

to our professional discussions and limit ourselves to our own specialized fields. All barriers between scientists, whether they be physical or biological, psychological or social, or economic or political should be transcended and all experiences should be collectively pooled together to meet global challenges. But that is not even sufficient. We should go to the people and learn from them. Their intuitive wisdom may be even richer than our accumulated knowledge. A head of state may not realize that he digs his own grave by taking away or abusing the sovereignty of the people. But, an ordinary citizen who believes in karma, karma vipaka and the cycle of births and deaths that we all are subjected to has intuitively realized this truth that life is born to suffering.

The time has come for every responsible member of the elite class to go to the masses, to live with them, to discover and innovate with them and find solutions to immediate problems. Then, we need to implement these solutions at all possible levels. Even judges and jurists should leave their chambers and mix up with poor and powerless people to realize the illusive elite world in which they themselves live. Instead of thinking that citizens are enjoying sovereignty and that the judiciary has the freedom to dispense justice, they should learn the true reality of the common man from the people.

In conclusion, I would like to draw your kind attention again to the following issues I raised in my presentation. As we fight the system as it exists today, work to make some changes in transparency and accountability, grant the right to information, and bring corruption to the center stage, we must pay attention and find ways and means to innovate new structures in every field. Only this will contribute to peace, co-existence and justice. For example, we must transcend religions and make them bridges to spiritual awakening where greed, aversions and ignorance of the people can be reduced. This will prevent individual evils in people from becoming institutionalized as organized greed, organized aversions and organized ignorance. The international flow of global capital is in and of itself a form of organized greed that is causing an immense damage to our local and national economies and freedoms. The neoliberal

concept of the free movement of global capital is the most detrimental invasion to our freedoms and cultures; nothing this detrimental has entered our lands since the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British invaders came with the modern weaponry of those times. In the same way, there were individuals with vested interests who held on to their self-interest and put it above national freedom and dignity in order to welcome these invaders. Even today there are such anti-national elements in our official and private sectors who welcome foreign global capital in the name of investment for so-called growth of the economy. The locals are adversely affected by the corrupt practices. The impact on the ecology and environment is also forcefully hidden using legal arms of the government or underworld gangs when necessary.

Militarization and building of so-called armed forces in the name of national security and defense is also an organized form of ill-will or aversion. This is an extension of greed for the acquisition and retention power. Lasting security can come only by reawakening our spiritual and moral stature as nations; it cannot come exclusively through armed strength. Also, those in charge of the media deceive people as well. The media keeps the people mesmerized over the physical wonders rulers achieve through macro-projects that involve high technology. People are misinformed or left uninformed by the media as it does not reveal the truth about the increasing degeneration of spiritual, moral and cultural life.

I again express the need to transform the existing social, economic and political systems without delay. The fault is not in people but in the systems that tempt us to give in to greed, ill-will and ignorance, which we all possess in different degrees. I stand with you in the formation of a Movement for Academic Social Responsibility, in preparing a compendium of social issues and getting countrywide youth movement mobilized under the guidance of scientists. I wish you the very best in deciding upon a Wardha vision of peaceful co-existence and I am looking to learn from your collective wisdom. May you and the entire living world be well and happy in the coming New Year.

References:

Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Art. 3 & 4.

Gandhi, M. (1997). *Hind Swaraj and other writings*. A. Parel, (Ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Indian Academy of Social Science. (2011). A note on the Indian republic at the crossroads. In *The XXXII Indian social science congress*. Retrieved from http://www.issaindia.in/oip/32nd_indian_social.asp.

**Inaugural Address at the 44th All
India Sarvodaya Samaj Sammelan**

Gandhi Memorial Museum

Madurai, India
December 29th-31st 2011

Namaskaram, Vanakkam, Asslamallakum, Ayubowan, May You All Live Long, Sarvewysukhinassanthu. This welcome is to all of you, including most respected Shri Bal Vijay, the President of the 44th All India Sarvodaya Samaj Sammelan, Dr. N. Mahalingam, Chairman of the Gandhi Museum, Madurai, Dr. T.R. Dinakaran, treasurer, Gandhi Museum, Dr. S.N. Subba Rao, convener, Sarvodaya Samaj Sewagram, Shri A. Annamalai, Tamilnad Sarvodaya Mandal, Shri K.M. Natarajan, Tamilnad Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, and all the Sarvodaya leaders who have arrived from different parts of India and other countries, and all my dear elders, brothers and sisters.

At the inception of my inaugural address to the 44th All India Sarvodaya Samaj Sammelan I wish to thank you very sincerely, my dear brother and inspirer, Advocate Shri M. Mariappan, Chairman of Sarvodaya Ilakkiya Pannai. You came to Sri Lanka and invited me on behalf of the organizers to inaugurate this conference. This is an honor that I never expected. I have addressed many important meetings and conferences in India as well as in other parts of the world. But, to be invited to inaugurate the Sarvodaya Samaj Sammelan in the land of Mahatma Gandhi's birth and of the Sarvodaya Movement, is something unique to experience in my 80 years. By entrusting me with this assignment of making the inaugural address, you have bestowed upon me a great honor as well as a great responsibility.

Why do I say this? I am one of those unconventional Sarvodaya workers or followers of Mahatma Gandhi. Yet, I have sacrificed my entire adult life to work towards achieving my conception of a Sarvodaya social order on this planet. I must confess that while I will continue to carry on with this mission to the very end of my life, I am very disappointed with the elite class of India and those of other newly independent countries for their failure to grasp and implement the Sarvodaya Ideal that Gandhiji placed before them with total people's participation and a new social order that works for the welfare of all. Instead, what they promote to this day are the social, political and economic systems that we inherited from the colonial times, of course with certain modifications. The leading classes

completely ignored the philosophy, principles and objectives that were outlined clearly by Mahatma Gandhi in his historic publication Hind Swaraj.

I would like to quote the last few sentences with which Gandhiji ended the book. I quote:

...I bear no enmity towards the English but do towards their civilization. In my opinion, we have used the word 'Swaraj' without understanding its real significance. I have endeavoured to explain it as I understand it, and my conscience testifies that my life henceforth is dedicated to its attainment.

We all pay tribute to Mahatma Gandhi for initiating the independence movement toward freedom from colonial powers. This began in South Africa, continued in India and opened a way to freedom for all of us, in Sri Lanka, other Asian countries and even African and Latin American countries that were subjugated by imperial powers. Without exception, nearly all these newly independent nations have ignored the path to real freedom shown to us by Mahatma Gandhi. It begins with every single one of us following a path to freedom or self-realization; this concept is principally spiritual. Religion may be a pathway to this spiritual concept, just so long as the spiritual content in religion is not overshadowed by its externalities to include forms of worship and ritual. Secularism should not imply absence of spiritual and moral values. Our post-independent political masters cleverly manipulated secular representative democratic politics and adopted constitutions and passed legislation to make the sacred principle of sovereignty of the people an empty notion. I will come to this subject later in my speech.

It is my duty, before I go further, to introduce the background from which I come; I will discuss how I was drawn to the Sarvodaya Movement, what we have been trying to do in Sri Lanka for the last fifty years and what our future plans are. I will do this very briefly, though it is a long story. Also, your critical understanding of our approach and your wise guidance will be

much appreciated and will be helpful to us in Sri Lanka.

I come from a Buddhist family background. My parents, elders, relations and all others in my village were devoted and practicing Buddhists. As a child, the first lesson I learned was to respect and protect all life. As I grew up and shifted from my village environment to the urban area for higher education (those days in the English medium), this central thought that was practically in my blood became disturbed by various extraneous influences. These influences were prevalent in our society and conditioned by caste, race, religion, language, power politics, consumer economics and many other man-made constraints. However, together with my colleagues, I held on to this thought of respecting and protecting all life and of being of service to all living beings even when I faced tough opposition.

I was propelled by this idea and so I engaged myself in all kinds of social service activities while I was still studying. I completed my junior, senior and higher education quite satisfactorily without my social service work interfering in any way with my studies. On the contrary, studying and social service complemented each other so much that the concept of study service became a fascination to me. In my village, in the Teachers' Training College, in the university I studied, and as a teacher at Nalanda College, Colombo, I was engaged in a variety of study service activities with my colleagues and students.

It was at this time, with a fellow teacher, who is working with me even now, that I travelled to New Delhi to participate in the New Education Fellowship Conference held in 1960. As young teachers, we were inspired to see and listen to great Indian leaders like Shri Pandit Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Zakir Hussein and many other top most Indian leaders of the day. We were quite inspired as young people and were enthusiastic to learn as much as possible from this conference. A lecture by the celebrated founder of Gandhi Gram University, Prof. G. Ramachandran, changed my life's mission through one word he uttered - Sarvodaya.

The moment I heard this word I thought of the specific teaching

of the Buddha concerning working for the well-being of all living beings, Sabbe Satta Suki Hontu. At the same time, I felt that we could start to bring back values and ideals that existed before the advent of colonization to our society. We could make Sri Lanka what the ancients called, a land of righteousness, dharmadweepa, and a land of plenty, dhanyagara. This could be realized again through application of Buddha's teachings that are relevant to spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political sectors in our society. After I returned home to Sri Lanka, we renamed The Shramadana Movement; it became The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement.

I read about Gandhiji, but I never saw him. I was fortunate to walk and talk with Acharya Vinoba Bhave on three occasions. I was also fortunate to associate with and learn from Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, both in India and also when he visited Sri Lanka on two occasions with his wife Prabhawathie Devi; I coordinated their travel and activities in Sri Lanka. I remember with gratitude Shri E.W. Ariyanayagam, the Sri Lankan-born educationist who implemented Gandhiji's Nai Talim or New Education, otherwise known as basic education programs. His wife, Asha Devi Ariyanayagam, inspired our Shanthi Sena Movement. There were many other Indian leaders to whom we are indebted. They inspired us and also helped us develop Sarvodaya philosophy and programs to build a Sarvodaya social order.

I am happy to announce to you today, that after fifty-three years of continuous work, we in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka have found a practical and non-violent path on which we are proceeding to build a Sarvodaya social order that is relevant to our country, our people and our needs. Perhaps our colleagues in India may also be able to gain some benefit from what we are doing, just as we benefited from what Gandhiji, Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, and all the other great Indian leaders achieved in this country. Therefore, I will outline the way we have developed the Sarvodaya philosophy, laid down the Sarvodaya principles, managed to get legislative recognition and popular support for the work we are doing, created organizational structures,

implemented a variety of integrated programs, co-existed and partnered with other organizations that may have different objectives and formed a relationship with the government.

Arahant Mahinda, the son of Emperor Ashoka, and his sister, Bhikkuni Sangamittha, came to Sri Lanka to deliver the Buddha's message 2,300 years ago. He preached the Buddha's Dharma and the King, the Queen and the people of Sri Lanka embraced Buddhism. After the whole nation was converted to Buddhism our king asked Arahant Mahinda whether the Buddha's dispensation and teachings have taken root in Sri Lanka. Arahant Mahinda replied that no, not until some of the king's sons and daughters of Sri Lanka have entered the Order of Sangha, (these include Bhikkhu, the monks, Bhikkhuni, the female monks, Upasaka, lay male devotees and Upasika, female lay devotees)". After Sri Lankans joined the Sangha and received higher ordination, the Buddha Sasana was established in Sri Lanka and it is flourishing to this day, even in spite of hard times under foreign invasions that occurred from the 12th century to the 19th century.

Similarly, we wanted to make Sarvodaya philosophy and practice our own. We wanted to integrate Ghandhiji's Sarvodaya model with our own indigenous character without losing universal appeal and application. Taking the above historic example, we in Sri Lanka defined, sarvam and udayam as Sarvodaya, or the awakening of all and service for the welfare of all. The word 'awakening' is of foremost importance in relation to spiritual development. Buddhi means 'intelligence'. Bodhi means 'to awaken'. Buddhameans 'The Awakened One'. As Buddhists, we are living our lives according to the Buddha Dharma and have as our ultimate goal the awakening or total liberation from suffering. This suffering is caused by the endless chain of births and deaths that we call the samsaric cycle. To break this cycle of suffering, we have to awaken our personality to the fullest until every trace of greed, aversion and ignorance is eradicated from our minds. So, the Movement is founded on a strong spiritual foundation of dana (beneficence or sharing), sila (morality) and bhavana (meditation).

For five decades we tried numerous educational, community

development and social transformation programs. We have no doubt that thousands of people and hundreds of rural and urban communities benefited from these programs in several ways. The people awakened to self-reliance. The people experienced people's power that arose when they collectively participated in their own self-development. The people discovered their historic vision; a vision that was blurred for over five centuries by foreign civilizations that imposed on the people. The people learned the art and science of differentiating between their greed and needs at basic, secondary and tertiary levels. Thus, through Sarvodaya thought and practice, the people found a mission that they could easily identify themselves with.

After five decades of trial and error, we are still facilitating, programming and formulating an integrated practical agenda that is taking us toward a complete Sarvodaya social order. Today, we work at six levels to achieve the awakening of all – Sarvodaya. These six levels are all interrelated. These six levels are:

1. Purna Paurushodaya
(Total Personality Awakening)
2. Kutumbodaya
(Family Awakening)
3. Gramodaya
(Village Awakening)
4. Nagarodaya
(City or Urban Community Awakening)
5. Deshodaya
(National Awakening)
6. Vishvodaya
(World or Universal Awakening)

Sarvodaya cannot exist without a holistic approach. Also, awakening at any level is related to and influences all other levels of awakening. Furthermore, a good human personality is an asset to an individual's family and community as well as to his/her nation and the whole of humanity. Our movement substituted the word 'awakening' for the often-used and materialistically-biased word 'development.' For us in the

Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka, development is an awakening process. Without spiritual awakening to the three cardinal principles of truth, non-violence and self-denial, materialistic development is counterproductive or even destructive. We apply these cardinal principles when we as individuals and groups remember that the critical indicator to measure our success or failure in life is our own inner transformation toward a spiritual goal; our success in life does not come from external materialistic achievements.

To successfully achieve our principal objective of building a Sarvodaya Samaj from the individual level to the universal level, we must re-orient and re-construct existing value systems and structures wherever necessary. We must re-think our spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political life. We have been engaged continuously for over fifty years in this constructive, non-violent action and all this work cannot be described in a short presentation. I will only say that a comprehensive people's participatory program is in the process of implementing and integrating the above mentioned six sectors. In reality, this is a silent, non-violent, total revolution that is occurring in 15,000 communities.

Over 5,600 community-level Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies obtained legal status. Most of these societies started their own savings, credit and microenterprises programs. Over 3,000 communities are working on an integrated self-governance program, Grama Swarajya. There are eleven independent incorporated Sarvodaya specialist units that offer different manners of support to the Grama Swarajya program.

The societies involved in the Grama Swarajya program do not participate in election campaigns or confrontational party/power politics. Instead, these societies are trying to build self-reliant, self-managed and self-governing communities. This work is purely based on moral principles and does not violate state laws. In the face of a financial regime that benefits capitalist interests, these communities are struggling to get statutory approval for their self-managed finance centers. They are working to save and then obtain the capital they need for

their agricultural, cottage, industrial, trade, services and other need satisfaction activities.

All of you must be aware of the nearly three decades of armed conflict that occurred between the government and the LTTE (the latter is generally known as a terrorist outfit). Sarvodaya implemented a five-fold program during the entire period, and this program was popularly called the 5R program. It involved relief, rehabilitation, reconciliation, reconstruction and re-awakening. During the 2004 tsunami that struck most coastal villages in the southern and eastern areas of Sri Lanka, Sarvodaya was the first and the largest civil sector organization to assist affected people. This assistance continued for over two-and-a-half years. With this kind of track record in development and peace The Movement launched what we call the Deshodaya (National Awakening) Movement; this launch occurred just two years ago.

Sarvodaya is continuing to make progress under its holistic concept of developing the individual, the family, the village and urban communities, the nation and even the world. We started organizing Deshodaya Councils at Pradeshiya (Divisional Levels) and also at district levels when our Grama Swaraya program reached the 3,000 village mark. Today, there are District Deshodaya Councils elected by the members of the Deshodaya Mandalas in all districts and Pradeshiya Divisions of Sri Lanka; there are more than 300 councils in total. After forming the councils two years ago, our next step was to train 100,000 Deshodaya Mandala members and offer encouragement so that they could form themselves into a National Deshodaya Sabha (Assembly). They then began dedicating themselves voluntarily and taking non-violent, direct action to educate people and various governmental and civil society organizations on national issues.

Our national constitution states that the various organs of the state come under three broad branches of government. These are the legislative branch, the executive branch and the judiciary branch; these branches of government are meant to deliver good governance to the citizens. Good governance

means a system of administration that guarantees every citizen fair and equal treatment under the law and offers protection of fundamental human rights. Good governance is meant to overcome anti-social practices such as bribery, corruption, fraud, violence, etc.; it is meant to foster a government that preserves and promotes spiritual, moral, cultural and social values. Good governance is meant to foster a government that consistently provides for the conservation of natural resources such as rivers, streams, and other water resources. Under good governance, a government is meant to maintain clean air, oceans, soils and ecological and biological systems that are endowed by nature for the continued sustainability of humanity. Good governance is meant to protect fauna and flora.

Chapter 1 Article 3 of the Sri Lankan Constitution states:

In the Republic of Sri Lanka sovereignty is in the people and is inalienable. Sovereignty includes the powers of government, fundamental rights and the franchise.

Then Chapter 1 Article 4 notes that the manner in which the sovereignty of the people shall be exercised and enjoyed is through legislative power to the parliament, executive power to a president who will exercise it with a cabinet of ministers in terms of Article 43, and judicial power that will be exercised through courts that will be set up by parliament, etc.

From that clause onwards, a careful in-depth study of our constitution and the manner in which it appears to operate in reality brings me to the conclusion that the people's sovereignty is limited mostly to people exercising their franchise by having the right to cast their vote once every several years. Although these divided and separated sovereign powers are meant to be held 'in trust' for the people, and although power is only exercised by these institutions as 'temporary guardians' on behalf of the citizens, in reality it appears that the power of the people is further limited by this style of governance. If one were to look carefully through the amendments to the constitution and numerous other acts passed by the Parliament, one would

see this reality. We the citizens are reduced simply to voters and we have lost almost all of the powers given to us as citizens by that so-called sovereignty in the constitution.

I am sure this same situation prevails in most of the so-called democratic countries. The elected representatives in these countries manipulate the supreme law and the constitutions to enhance and perpetuate their own power and position. This is done to the detriment of good governance and people's sovereignty. This I consider to be the root cause of the progressive deterioration of so-called democracy. I consider this to be the multiplication of all evils in the social, economic and political sectors of our nations. Perhaps Mahatma Gandhi foresaw this situation one-hundred years ago. Perhaps he saw this late in his struggle for freedom when he stated that post-independent India should not follow the western systems and structures but instead should create a Commonwealth of Village Republics.

Every day at all levels, wherever people meet formally or informally, even in countries where there is freedom of the media, there exists instances of criminal mismanagement of state resources, fraud, bribery, unlawful conduct and corrupt practices by leaders and their henchmen. Many people discuss and highlight these practices. I admire and stand in solidarity with all those people who have the courage to struggle and put pressure on our parliamentarians and legislators to pass legislation for the people's right to information. I stand with those who put pressure on our parliamentarians and legislators so that they will enforce transparency and accountability. I stand with the people who put pressure on governments to conserve our natural habitats, non-renewable natural resources, ecological infrastructure, environmental purity and cleanliness. I stand with those who stand against the invasion of global capital that will further impoverish our already dispossessed and powerless people in rural areas and urban slums. But, I do believe that we have a greater cause for which we should stand up in solidarity, while we simultaneously continue our struggle to clean the top.

The greater cause I am referring to is the need to lay a foundation to build a new civilization in place of the one we inherited from our former western masters. I think that I am fair by Mahatma Gandhi when I say this because I believe, as much as he believed over hundred years ago, that even today we have to identify the cause of the disease rather than merely grapple with the external symptoms. Modern civilization is the cause. Modern civilization is collapsing from all sides in spite of all the desperate attempts made by those who benefit from the current system to sustain it. The majority of humans inhabiting this planet reject this civilization in their own consciousness. They dream of a new way of life, a new civilization that works for all. Similarly, the majority of human beings in the world reject the existing exploitative, unfair, violent, unstable and wasteful economy and yearn for an alternative system. Lastly, people have lost all confidence in the twin brother of the economy, namely, the power political structures.

I am not saying that the present civilization will collapse overnight and a new one can be built in a few years. On the other hand, I am saying that certainly we can make a beginning in that direction if we realize that we can follow a clear Sarvodaya path as individuals, families and communities. We implement projects and programs in Sri Lanka that are beneficial to the people in the short run while keeping in mind the transformation we need in the civilization. Through study service programs, shramadana camps for basic need satisfaction, integrated community development programs, a ten thousand villages development scheme, development education programs for people of all ages, mass meditation walks to build peace and the Grama Swarajya promotion program, slowly but steadily, we succeed in building a strong psycho-social environment. This is an environment where leaders can now take up the challenge of building a new civilization. The Deshodaya Movement fits nicely into this idea of new leadership for a new civilization.

Village or community self-governance, grama or praja swarajya, is a start in making the sovereignty of the people a reality. This notion gives people a direct opportunity to contribute to good governance. If this movement spreads to cover a critical mass

of communities in the country, the system of representative democracy will be replaced by a system of direct participatory democracy that evolves over a period of time. This is the exact modality that we are now in the process of discussing, without harming or in any manner transgressing upon the laws and regulations that govern and bind us, so that we will once again have the “spirit” of constitutionalism in a more functional form for the benefit of the citizen. This is the ultimate repository of state sovereignty. As the Deshodaya Movement has a strong spiritual base, revival of improved moral and cultural relations among people will be easy. Similarly, we have a great advantage in that we are able to horizontally coordinate our communication technology.

I mentioned earlier in my speech the newly formed Deshodaya Sabha, or National Reawakening Assembly, which will have 100,000 members representing all districts and every community and ethnic group in the country. Already, eighteen district meetings of 1,000 representatives from the entire 25 district took place. These meeting last three days and consist of a residential training and study program on three related subjects, namely, transforming the consciousness, transforming the economy and transforming power structures in the country. About ten activities are discussed under each topic so that when the people return to their residential areas, they are able educate others and add these thirty new activities to their already existing programs. We are working toward a Deshodaya Sabha that has an equitable gender representation as well as 50% of the membership coming from non-Sarvodaya sectors; these include politicians who accept our general principles such as non-violence and non-sectarianism.

So far I have explained our conception of the non-violent revolutionary change of the existing social order that is occurring in our country and can occur in our countries as well. Those nations who feel that they too have lost their sovereignty in their own societies or feel that there is much to be desired in the field of good governance can implement and design a similar kind of non-violent philosophy and program that fits with local spiritual, moral and cultural norms. The same is

true with regard to the economic crises most of nations are experiencing. This kind of world re-awakening program can be named as Vishvodaya.

We, the Sarvodaya practitioners in India, Sri Lanka and in other countries where there are Sarvodaya chapters, can assist other nations to build personality awakening, family awakening, group and community awakening and national awakening programs that are relevant to these nations' problems and national needs. Already in almost every country there exist various people's organizations. These organizations are well organized and working for the conservation of ecological and environmental infrastructure and coming up with solutions for the challenges of climate change, economic collapse, political mismanagement in the field of good governance and so on. The long track record of the Gandhian Movement in India and the increasingly important recognition that Gandhiji's teachings suggest that the time is ripe to incorporate all of this into one universal movement of world reawakening – Vishvodaya.

I am sure this land of Bharat, or what in Sri Lanka we call Jambudweepa, will have at least one philanthropist, among her large number of billionaires who will come forward to support Vishvodaya. This person can help save the present human civilization from its chaotic situation. Together, we can build a new world civilization founded on the eternal teachings of the Upanishads, Vedas, the Buddha and the unique examples set by Emperor Ashoka the Great in good governance and Mahatma Gandhi in people's participatory direct democracy.

Thank you, dear friends. May you all be well and happy!

References:

Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Art. 3 & 4.

Gandhi, M. (1997). Hind Swaraj and other writings. A. Parel, (Ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Shanthi Ashram 25th Anniversary Address

*Shanthi Ashram
Coimbatore, India*

January 30th, 2012

I wish to thank Mrs. Minuti Aram, President of the Shanthi Ashram, and Dr. Miss Vino Aram for inviting the three of us, namely, Mr. Arjuna Krishnaratne, my assistant, my wife Mrs. Neetha Dhammachari, and myself for this important event. I promised Dr. Vino Aram many months ago that I would try my very best to be present at the 25th anniversary of the founding of Shanthi Ashram.

It is a duty and an obligation on my part to come and participate in your events more often. Your co-founder, the late Padmashri Dr. M. Aram, was a very dear elder and colleague of mine who I met at numerous international events connected with religion and peace. It was very easy for both of us followers of the Sarvodaya philosophy to work together at international forums like the World Conference on Religion and Peace and also as advisors of the InterAction Council, which is a forum of former heads of state. I am grateful and happy that Mrs. Aram and her daughter are continuing in the footsteps of the late Dr. Aram.

It is a great learning experience for me to meet you on this occasion and interact with development activists, members of academia, Panchayats, Gandhian institutions and religious representatives. I have been involved in social work and community development since my school days. I spent fifty-four years with the Sarvodaya Movement and before the Sarvodaya Movement I spent ten student years involved in community service.

I remember a lot of friends who took to parliamentary politics or extra-parliamentary means to capture state power. They ridiculed me and my colleagues and told us that were just "do-gooders". They said do-gooding will not help anybody, but will be of detriment to the situation of the poor and the oppressed. They were of the view that it was necessary to capture state power and then use it to eradicate poverty and correct all kinds of social ills that we are faced with.

I remember that I did not take time to answer those criticisms because I felt that it would be a waste of my time. I understood that their aim was to bring about a change in the economic and

political structure of the society and build more progressive and just systems and institutions. They just did not pay heed to the means they would need to adopt in order to build a just and fair society. They followed the theory that the end justifies the means. As a person who believes in truth, non-violence and righteousness, I could not simply agree with this principle. So, I abstained from participating in any kind of power-oriented politics, according to the so-called constitutional democracy. I abstained from resorting to extra constitutional means. On the other hand, together with my colleagues, I plunged headlong down a community-based path to change. We looked at the particular problems that a community faced and found ways and means of solving those problems by non-violent means, most often this was done by harnessing the communities' own labor and resources.

In this manner we succeeded in combating caste discriminations, religious rivalries, racial conflicts, political disturbances and other social and economic deprivations. Over a period of years, we went from village to village to discover problems and solutions with people's participation. Together with the people we built our own theory of non-violent social transformation. A village elder taught us to formulate a portfolio of basic human needs. They were:

1. A clean and beautiful psychological and physical environment
2. A clean and adequate supply of water for consumption as well as for agricultural purposes
3. A balanced diet
4. Health care
5. Simple and comfortable clothing
6. A healthy simple house to live in
7. Total education
8. Communication facilities
9. Energy requirements
10. Spiritual and cultural needs

Based on these ten basic human needs, we delved into subdivisions of these needs and helped our communities

get organized with their own self-reliance and community participation. We helped our communities satisfy their community needs and these needs differed from community to community. We started in one village, but over a period of time we succeeded in making the basic needs satisfaction program a movement all across our country. I would like to emphasize that massive basic needs satisfaction programs were launched soon after ours and our movement became a national movement where not only Sarvodaya, but also governmental and other non-governmental agencies worked toward a common goal. Numerous trees were planted and irrigation tanks, irrigation canals, rural roads, preschool buildings, community centers, drinking water wells, small bridges, culverts, houses, toilets and community water service schemes were built. These all contributed to the infrastructure development of our village communities.

There is one important thing I would like to emphasize here. All these accomplishments occurred through harnessing the people's power. People volunteered labor and villagers offered food and accommodation to outsiders who came to volunteer in villages in large numbers. The villagers provided tools and other materials we needed for the projects and even traditional technical knowledge we could use in meeting the basic needs of the village communities. We operated on the principle that our people are simple people. They lead a simple way of life. Their needs were simple. Their problems were simple. To solve these simple problems they needed simple solutions. This principle worked.

Then a stage came when we needed capital to bring about a change in the villagers' economic life. Capital was needed but the villagers did not have collateral to access to banks in those days. So, we encouraged savings habits and taught villagers the scientific way of saving. When the common people had sufficient money saved, we taught them the methodology of microcredit. We also provided villagers with the necessary entrepreneurship training, management and technical skills from outside resources when this knowledge was needed. As this effort grew into a national movement, we founded an

independent economic enterprise development service unit, which we named SEEDS. Today, it is a guarantee company which is the largest microcredit operation program in the country. We are now attempting to promote its status so that it will be a national-level finance institution that can help village people undertake big economic tasks that are presently given to outside contractors.

All these activities needed a philosophical foundation, scientific methods and techniques and also organizational and institutional structures. We succeeded in building, at the national level, twelve incorporated national institutions that specialize in various aspects of development, welfare, peace and social transformation and guide the Sarvodaya communities. Similarly, we have succeeded in building a five-stage development technique that is solely implemented by the village communities themselves through Sarvodaya societies. 5,600 of these societies have already gained status as independent and incorporated legal entities.

We have now reached what we call the Deshodaya Program after progressively building up our highly decentralized, yet coordinated organizations step-by-step. Deshodaya means national awakening. We have now formed 300 Deshodaya Councils at divisional and district levels. Out of a total of 15,000 Sarvodaya village communities, the councils come from 3,000 of these communities that have promoted themselves into the level of gramaswarajya or village self-governance.

Two years ago, these 300 Deshodaya Councils nominated their representatives to a national Deshodaya Assembly. These representatives are now trained to take up national issues pertaining to spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political transformation of our society. These national issues are organized under thirty items. These thirty items come under what we call (1) transformation of consciousness, (2) transformation of the economy and (3) transformation of political structures. In this manner we have been able to attract 20,000 Deshodaya Assembly Members to join the Deshodaya Movement to work toward a total transformation of ourselves

and our society. Our target is 100,000 Deshodaya Members within the next year or two. I am happy to say that we have found a non-violent way to transform our society so that all communities can live at a satisfactory economic level and in a peaceful and just social and political environment.

My contemporaries who ridiculed, insulted and even tried to sabotage this work because it went against their target of capturing power legally or illegally are no longer among the living. Some died in violence aimed at them when they violently fought the regime. Others died in prison. Yet, others who took to non-violent power politics rose to the highest rank in society, amassed a lot of wealth and even handed over to their kith and kin the opportunity to continue the system; then they died. Most of the people have forgotten them and their ideologies. But, we are still continuing our work. We are in no hurry as our objective is neither power nor wealth. We are believers of karma and karma vipaka and re-birth. So, for us spirituality is the priority.

May Dr. Aram acquire the merits I may have gathered by participating in this meritorious event. Thank you, Mrs. Aram, and thank you Vino.

**Gandhian Inspiration Nourishes
A Development Movement
Based on the Buddhist Philosophy**

*The First Gandhi Research Foundation Lecture
Jalgaon, Maharashtra, India*

March 25th, 2012

Introduction

Just over three weeks ago, I was surprised to receive an invitation letter from Sri Bhavarlal Jain, the founder of the Gandhi Research Foundation, asking me to participate in the opening ceremony of the Gandhi Teerth as the guest of honor. I was asked to deliver the first Gandhi Research Foundation Lecture. My health, age and day-to-day engagements do not provide me with much time to prepare an academic lecture that might be useful to researchers and scholars. But, I decided to accept this invitation and share some of my experiences in order to pay my humble veneration to that great global figure, Mahatma Gandhi. In his memory, the single most consummate and largest monument was built and is dedicated to humanity today, here in Jalgaon, under the gracious leadership of Her Excellency Smt. Pratibha Devisingh, President of India.

I consider it the fruition of a good karma in my life that I am present here to witness this unique achievement made possible by the generosity of Sri Bavarlal Jain, the Founder of GRF, and his colleagues and collaborators. This kind of beneficence is very rare in the present world where most of humanity is dominated by greed. I have traveled to many places, but no matter where I am in the world, what comes to my mind as the root cause of all global problems is man's ingenuity to organize greed and incorporate it into scientific and technological innovations as well as religious and socio-economic institutions that benefit few and are of detriment to the majority. On this historic occasion, I wish that all of us resolve to take the example of Sri Bavarlal Jain and organize dana, beneficence in human beings, to realize the Gandhian vision of a poverty-free and peaceful world.

A mercenary visit

In November of 1927, Gandhiji visited Sri Lanka (Ceylon) which he himself called a 'mercenary visit.' He appealed to one and all, rich and the poor, students, teachers and parents, employers and laborers. He inspired many to open their purses and donate money to support the teeming millions of starving poor in India by helping them generate income through the spinning, weaving, selling and wearing of khadi. No matter where he

went, he was welcomed by large crowds, ranging from national leaders to common people, all of whom contributed to his cause of Daridra Narayana.

He made a large number of speeches in all parts of Sri Lanka, including the south, the central hills and the North. He addressed the Mahinda College prize giving (my alma mater), Nalanda College and Vidyodaya College where I once was on the tutorial staff. Unfortunately, I was unable to see him speak there because his speech occurred several years before I was born. He appealed to the Buddhists to strive towards a Buddhist revival in all the Buddhist institutions. More information on this promotion of the Buddhist revival can be found in 'With Gandhiji in Ceylon'.

Call for a Buddhist revival

Gandhiji was very outspoken in all the speeches that he gave in Sri Lanka in 1927. Unhesitatingly, he condemned many upper-class Buddhists on their habit of consuming meat. He also criticized the drinking habits he saw in many Sri Lankan people. He emphasized the fact that Buddha's loving kindness went beyond humans and was extended to all living beings including the smallest creatures. Gandhiji noted that the non-violence the Buddha preached did not stop at non-killing, but it also included abstinence from eating flesh of animals that others slaughter. He advocated that Sri Lankan Buddhists should take leadership to bring about a Buddhist revival. Perhaps Gandhiji was not aware of the Buddhist awakening that had already started during the middle of the 19th century. The western civilization influenced the Buddhist way of life for four centuries and the upper and middle classes were keen on adherence to the western customs. Yet, on account of national pride, these classes identified themselves as Buddhists and supported Col. Henry Steele Olcott, the American theosophist who founded the Buddhist Theosophical Society and pioneered the establishment of Buddhist higher education institutions in Sri Lanka.

Buddhist educational institutions and the Buddhist communities welcomed Gandhiji in massive numbers and showed that

Buddhist revival was already happening. They did not mind Gandhiji's inclusion of Buddha and His teachings within the broader Hindu religious context. Venerable monks of the three leading Buddhist colleges, Vidyodaya, Vidyalankara and Paramadhammachethiya encouraged and supported the laymen led by Deshabandu F.R. Senanayake. It was he who started the Sri Lanka Temperance Movement which was a preparatory arm for the independence struggle yet to commence, and this was similar to Gandhiji's Satyagraha Movement in South Africa and India. Meanwhile, Sri Anagarika Dharmapala and his Mahabodhi Society of India was in the process of waging two struggles. One was to take Buddha Gaya under the control of the Buddhists and the other was to support the Indian and Sri Lankan freedom struggle.

A new Buddhist awakening

Gandhiji did not anticipate that the Khadi Movement would fail catch in most parts of Sri Lanka. The Buddhist revival was mostly limited to educational, ritualistic and cultural fields after independence in 1948. There was no attempt made to adapt Buddhist philosophy and principles to the social, political and economic realities of post-independence Sri Lanka. Perhaps history will record that it was at this stage that the students and teachers of Nalanda College pioneered a new Buddhist reawakening movement which has today become internationally famed as Buddhist philosophy in development action.

It started in mid 1950s as a study service program where school children of higher grades camped in the most rural villages during weekends and vacations. They learned from the people of values, modes of livelihood, traditional technologies and so on while also contributing their time and energy for development of villages by gifting their labor, knowledge and other skills. This movement spread out into hundreds of educational institutions. Thousands of students and tens of thousands of village people involved in this movement were popularly known at that stage as the Shramadana Movement.

The gift of labor, skills, resources, land and even cash is dana in

Buddhist terminology. When we organized shramadana camps, it was a kind of organized beneficence as these gift-of-labor-camps helped satisfy the basic needs of village communities. These basic needs included access roads, drinking water wells, irrigation reservoirs, irrigation canals, land reclamation work, etc. All of the shramadana activities amount to meritorious deeds according to Buddha's teachings. The principal participants in shramadana were students and teachers so a very high standard of self-discipline was maintained in the camps and these camps also became itinerant universities. The Shramadana Movement introduced a detailed, daily code of conduct that participants followed from 5 a.m. wake up until rest at 10 p.m. The program included seven to eight hours of physical labor followed by engagement in meditation, educational programs, cultural events, singing, music, dancing, and family gatherings.

In Buddhist terminology, this kind of self-discipline is known as sila. The third type of discipline that the participants cultivated in these shramadana camps is the development of right mindfulness through meditation programs. This is called bhavana. So, the simultaneous mass promotion of dana, sila and bhavana among the village folk in the initial four years of the Movement thus created what we used to call psychological infrastructure. It also fulfilled basic needs through gift of labor.

Gandhian inspiration

We re-named the Shramadana Movement as the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka in the early 1960s. The Gandhian Movement has always been a tremendous nourishment to our movement, particularly with the influence of Acharya Vijnoba Bhawe, Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, E.W. Ariyanayakam, Asha Devi Ariyanayakam, Prof. Sugathadas Gupta and several other Indian and Gandhian leaders. It is for this reason I chose the topic 'Gandhian Inspiration Nourishes a Development Movement Based on Buddhist Philosophy' and why I structured this lecture to be more informational and historical than scholarly.

When Dharma Gunasinghe (Sarvodaya Shramadana's present

treasurer) and I were young teachers at Nalanda College in Colombo, we attended a conference called the 'New Education Fellowship Conference' in 1960 in New Delhi. An address by Prof. G. Ramachandran on the concept of Sarvodaya left a lasting impression on both of us founding members of the Shramadana Movement. Upon our return, we discussed with our colleagues and decided to adopt the fascinating thought of 'well-being of all – Sarvodaya' to suit our Buddhist culture. We felt that this would give a broad base to our movement and that this would help the movement develop into a national people's force that could transform the entire society. We found that this change had to be brought about in an integrated way in spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political sectors of the society. We also decided that truth, non-violence and self-denial should be the guiding principles of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement.

The word sarvodaya was coined by Mahatma Gandhi but also happened to have a relevant meaning in the Sinhala language and Buddhist philosophy. For this reason, taking the Sarvodaya philosophy to the common people was not difficult. However, to conform more to the Buddhist ethos, we defined Sarvodaya as not only working for the wellbeing of all, but as working for the "total awakening of all."

Buddha's universal message

The Buddha's admonition is:

Dukkhappathacha Nikkudukkha

- To help those who physically suffer to overcome physical suffering;

Bhayappaththacha Nibhaya

- To help those who are in fear to overcome fear;

Sokappaththacha Nissoka

- To help those who are in mental pain to overcome mental pain;

Honthu Sabbepi panino

- May all sentient being be well and happy.

Thus, we are committed to serve not only human beings but

all other living beings as well. Right from the inception of our movement we extended our services to include the preservation of the plant and nature kingdoms in our development agenda. The fact that we adopted the sarvodaya word itself into our indigenous languages and culture illustrates the impact that the Gandhian Movement had on us.

Buddha means the 'awakened one.' Any human being can attain this state of total enlightenment by cultivating the ten paramitas or perfections. These are dana (giving or beneficence), sila (morality), nekkhamma (renunciation), panna (wisdom), viriya (effort), khamthi (patience), sacca (truth), adittana (determination), metta (loving kindness) and upekkha (equanimity). Of course, The Bodhisattva went through millions of cycles of births and deaths, living in various forms of beings, to cultivate to perfection these ten spiritual attainments. Yet, He said we too can achieve this state if we strive diligently. Mahatma Gandhi's life is certainly a bodhisattva model in the modern era. One can find the cultivation of all the above ten qualities in Mahatma's life and mission.

In a speech delivered at Vidyodaya College, Colombo, on 15th November 1927, Gandhiji stated,

...and sometimes I feel even proud of being accused of being a follower of the Buddha and I have no hesitation in declaring in the presence of this audience that I owe a great deal to the inspiration that I have derived from the life of the Enlightened One.

Sarvodaya - A fivefold awakening

As we started our movement with students and teachers as an educational experiment, our first objective was awakening of the human personality (purna paurushodaya). As we worked with the poorest communities (anthodaya), our second objective was gramodaya (village community awakening). As we progressed into urban communities, we also started nagarodaya (urban community awakening) programs. When we discovered but that a total transformation of the social, economic and political structures of the country was necessary,

we started our gram swaraj (village self-governance) and deshodaya (national awakening) program. When groups from various countries joined and worked with us in Sri Lanka and returned to make Sarvodaya chapters on their own, we named this process vishvodaya (world awakening). For five years, developing these objectives, formulating the principles, drawing up the work plans and inventing methods and techniques for implementation taxed the brains of hundreds of grassroots leaders and educated Sarvodaya. However, this work is not yet over. Now we are experimenting with our Deshodaya and Vishvodaya programs.

I am sorry to say that our national leaders and planners in the 1950's only thought of development as an economic development process to increase the GDP and per capita income. Our leaders were following the western patterns of the capitalists or communists and these systems were copied from the west. We at Sarvodaya were very much influenced by Gandhiji's admonition in his Hind Swaraj and decided to reject the western civilization that was imposed on us and revert to our own values and create a new civilization to face the challenges of the 20th century – now the 21st century. In a public speech he delivered in Badulla Sri Lanka on 19.11.1927, Gandhiji said,

Do not for the sake of your country, ape the manners and customs of others which can do only harm to you and for heaven's sake do not wish to be what every one of the people of Ceylon cannot be.

A search for a new civilization

Now we can proudly say that with the influence of Gandhian philosophy, we have a complete theoretical framework and a practical agenda to rebuild a Buddhist civilization in integrated spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political ways. In this kind of social order, every Sri Lankan citizen will enjoy equal status in every respect. While numerous welfare and development activities are carried out in 15,000 villages, new economic and political structures are tested as well. We are researching, experimenting and building the new Buddhist civilization model that works for all, including non-Buddhists.

Development education

We are closely watching how Indian and other, non-violent people's organizations are responding to the most recent global challenges. Based off our experiences and observations, we at Sarvodaya formulated a comprehensive development education program for leadership training at all levels. This program includes training in skills necessary for basic needs satisfaction in rural and urban communities, namely, needs pertaining to environment, water, clothing, nutrition, shelter, health, energy, communication, education, spirituality and culture. A priority in the leadership training is to remove the myths that people believe and have believed for decades.

We witnessed how the materialist world views crumbled during our life time; first the Marxist view and next the capitalist view. Both of these dominant world views shared some common characteristics between them. I would call them myths people were made to believe by mind conditioning that used all kinds of advertising techniques and propaganda media. These were sometimes misnamed as education and perpetrated by those who gained benefit from such false views.

Removing the myths

A main myth is that economic prosperity can grant us security and happiness and that economic growth should be the primary objective of any national economic development plan. This myth states that all available natural resources should be exploited to satisfy not only our real, but also our perceived needs and endless desires. This myth states that the more one consumes, the greater one's happiness will be. This myth also states that large scale, sophisticated and energy-consuming technology can give a better and more satisfying life to the people. The myth perpetuates the idea that energy sources are inexhaustible and their bad affects such as environmental pollution and ecological imbalances can be overcome by human ingenuity. The myth also perpetuates the idea that while talking of democracy, governments should retain centralized authority and keep people as far away as possible from centers or seats of power. The myth states that for national security, the most modern armed forces should be developed and maintained even if there are no

enemies or threats to freedom (of course, these security forces are there to protect 'legitimate' governments in case dissident elements within nations create insurgencies against them). The myth states that when it comes to the safeguarding of vested interests at the center in the name of national sovereignty and social and economic stability, it is quite in order to invest public finances for military expenditure even at the cost of resources needed for poverty reduction, food security, education, health of the people and housings needs. The myth spreads the idea that the sovereignty of the people should be interpreted as sovereignty of the state or government for public consumption. It also states that it is quite in order to arouse racist, religious, or nationalist sentiments in people. The myth even states that it is appropriate to curb the fundamental freedoms of people to protect this so called 'sovereignty' of a coercive government.

In perpetrating these myths, what have these two governance systems, and the other similar forms of governance we see today, left as their heritage for humanity? Governance today is simply leaving humanity more impoverished than ever. The earth is arguably less healthy than it was at the start of its 100,000 year old journey towards civilized life. Generally speaking, those in power have created a human society that is spiritually, morally, culturally, socially, economically and politically more desolate than before economic and political systems took over the world. The people in power and the systems they perpetuate have degenerated human beings, human families, urban and rural human communities, nations and a world community. In this present context, what should be the role of the teachings of the Buddha? What are the ways in which we can use the Dhamma to build a more equitable, tolerant and peaceful society, where there exists plenty of scope for human personality awakening and where contented and happy families and communities can live in peace with optimum satisfaction of basic human needs?

An acceptance of a common agenda

We cannot prescribe a standard Buddhist–Gandhian agenda that will work for all communities or countries. All communities and countries vary in their ethnic, religious, cultural and geographic composition. But, we can learn from each other and

our experiences. We can share commonalities that exist in the Buddhist–Gandhian value systems. We can make adjustments to suit different claims and we can easily draw up a commonly agreed agenda to work on.

Sarvodaya has established an independent legal entity to put forth an alternative economic approach. It is founded on Buddha's Teachings pertaining to economic matters as found in various texts. For example, the Buddhist Singalovada Sutta provides Buddha's teaching about spending what one earns by rightful means or following right livelihood. It states:

Ekena Bhoge Bunjeyya

- Use one fourth of your earnings for consumption,

Dvihi Kammam Payojaye

- Two fourths invest in the economic pursuit you do,

Chatunccanca Nidapeyya Apadasu Bhavissati

- Save one fourth to draw when you have an urgency

Our Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services, SEEDS, was established with this mission. The first step was to train communities to save and manage their money in the correct way and provide credit to those who need for specified purposes. These purposes exclude any enterprise that kills animals, destroys the environment, threatens life support systems, promotes production of intoxicants or other activities that are considered wrong livelihoods or sinful deeds in Buddhism. We advocate the creation of a 'no-poverty, no-affluence society.' As Mahatma Gandhi said, we should work to satisfy our needs and not be tempted by greed.

Our SEEDS organization has been very successful in 5,000 villages and it is expanding to cover even more villages. This is the largest people's savings, credit, microenterprise and community banking program in Sri Lanka. One of the main causes of conflict and war is poverty and lack of economic opportunity. When people are economically empowered and have equal opportunity to improve themselves, there is a lesser

tendency engage in crimes, robberies, bribery, corruption and violence to include civil disturbance and war. Under this program, we now have registered several hundred communities as legal entities under our current law. These communities now have considerable financial assets of their own.

Alternative politics

Sarvodaya always strives for peace and ethnic harmony. We have made no distinctions in our work in communities. We work with all ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka and also work in all parts of the country. The civil war that went on in this country for nearly three decades made Sarvodaya prioritize efforts to establish peace and ethnic harmony among the Sri Lankan people. Additionally, Sarvodaya works for peace without forgetting development. The Movement has a shanthisena (peace brigade) with over 140,000 trained youth. Over the last few years, Sarvodaya's model evolved to continue earlier development work but at the same time focuses on three critical domains of activity.

Our approach to peace-building is an integrated approach. We strive to transform the consciousness of people and also transform the economic and political power structures through a number of interconnected and interdependent programs. Wars begin in the minds of men. So, the way to peace also has to begin in the minds of men. The Sarvodaya Movement launched a threefold program to build lasting peace. First is the transformation of human consciousness, second is the improvement of the economy and third is bringing about a change in the political power structure.

People's sovereignty foremost

The transformation of people's consciousness, the economy and the power structure has to take place simultaneously with full participation of all people. This must also take place in both rural and urban communities. Our determination is to build up the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political processes and programs in Sri Lanka according to the guiding principles we can find in Buddha's teachings. I already described in an earlier part of this talk how we implement some of these principles in the community development work we

do. Now, if we are to take the village community as a whole, we can observe certain economic and political principles that are enunciated by the Buddha and can be implemented in our communities.

Spiritual awakening as the foundation

We created a new institution, Vishva Niketan, to take our work in the sphere of consciousness to a deeper level. While other units of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya such as Shanthisena continue to engage in peace marches, peace meditations and organize amity camps (where different ethnic and religious groups live and work together for a short time to learn about each other, care for each other and learn to value each other's culture), Vishva Niketan developed many new programs that are conducted at the community level and also in institutions such as prisons. The foundation of such programs is training in meditation. Our approach in these activities is indicated by the general name under which these activities are grouped and generally referred to, namely, Meth Sith Sabandiyo (Association of Minds of Loving Kindness). Thus, selected community youth leaders are trained as Meth Sith Sabandiyo and this extends this program's reach to many parts of the country. So, when it comes to peace-building based on Buddhist values, it is easy to see how to implement a set of activities in the sphere of consciousness.

Buddhist-Gandhian approach is the way

The past 50 years of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement was an attempt to practice within ourselves the teachings of the Buddha, and to extend these teachings to all those in need on our island of Sri Lanka. However, as all of you can recognize, the challenges facing humanity right now are mirrored in Sri Lanka, but are not exclusive to our island. The teachings of the Buddha, as we have attempted to practice in Sri Lanka, are relevant and necessary to a global audience, especially when we look at the ongoing economic crisis in the west. People are now searching for solutions as they witness their economic house of cards crumbling. The Buddha's teachings are the comprehensive solutions that many seek.

Before I conclude, I would like to draw your attention specifically to one of the roles the Gandhi Research Foundation can play with regard to present global problems. There are many research institutions, including the highly funded World Bank and United Nations' institutions that publish numerous reports about the global problems ranging from climate change to economic crisis to poverty and disease. However, in my opinion, they do not offer solutions and do not probe into the roots of the present global dilemma. It is here that a Gandhian and Buddhist approach can be used to understand the origins of the global crises and find possible solutions.

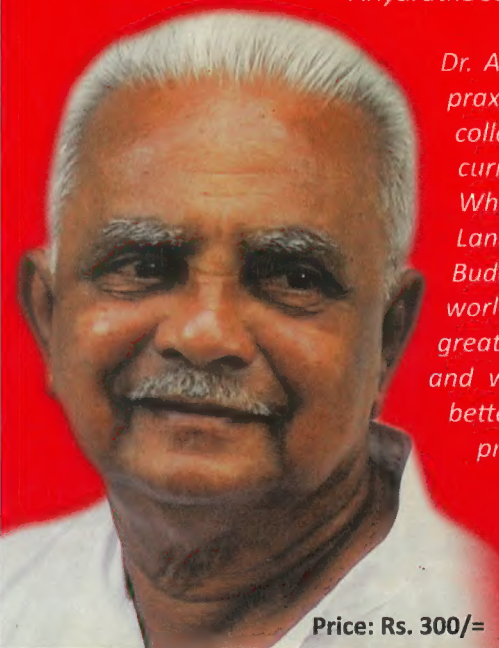
We should not confine our search only to our own Gandhian or Buddhist institutions, but also we should gather all possible information with regards to indigenous solutions that various communities all over the world continue to offer. Gandhi Teerth can be the global focal point from which a contribution to a new sustainable civilization can be effectively made. I am sure Shri Bavarlal Jain and his team will undertake this responsibility. May I thank all of you and wish every one of you success, good health and long life. May all beings be well and happy.

References:

- Bond, G. (2003). Buddhism at work: community development, social empowerment and the Sarvodaya Movement. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press.
- Desai, M. (1998). With Gandhiji in Ceylon (2nd ed.). Moratuwa, Sri Lanka: Vishva Lekhas Publishers Ltd.
- Macy, J. (1985). Dharma and development: religion as a resource in the Sarvodaya self-help movement. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press.

Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne founded the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement fifty-four years ago during his time as a high school science teacher. He brought a group of teachers and students to work with one low-caste Sri Lankan village on a sharing-of-labor project that resulted in material improvements to a village and awakening for all people involved. The one-time project developed into a movement of hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans who now work holistically under the Sarvodaya Shramadana umbrella to improve quality of life in Sri Lanka.

The first eight volumes of Ariyaratne's collected works cover the development of the philosophy and the praxis of this grand movement for its first forty-seven years up to year 2007. This ninth volume of collected works extends Sarvodaya's action and philosophy through five more years that have been of great magnitude for Sri Lanka and for Sarvodaya. Vital events that occurred in this five-year period include the end of Sarvodaya's short-term 2005 tsunami recovery programming, the end of Sri Lanka's thirty-year civil conflict and the start of Sarvodaya's civil conflict recovery programming, the global recession, further environmental disaster, Sarvodaya's 50th birthday and also Ariyaratne's own 80th birthday.



Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne's thought and praxis in this 9th volume of collected works is a gift to current and future students. Whether we are old, young, Sri Lankan, non-Sri Lankan, Buddhist, or from another of the world's religions, we can glean great insight from these speeches and writings about how we can better apply Sarvodaya principles in their truest sense, for the enactment of positive change and for the benefit of all.

Price: Rs. 300/=

ISBN 978 955 599 513 9